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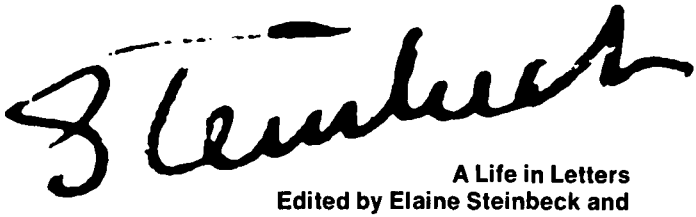

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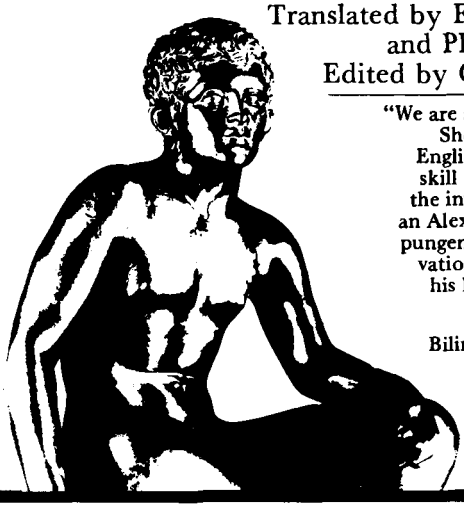

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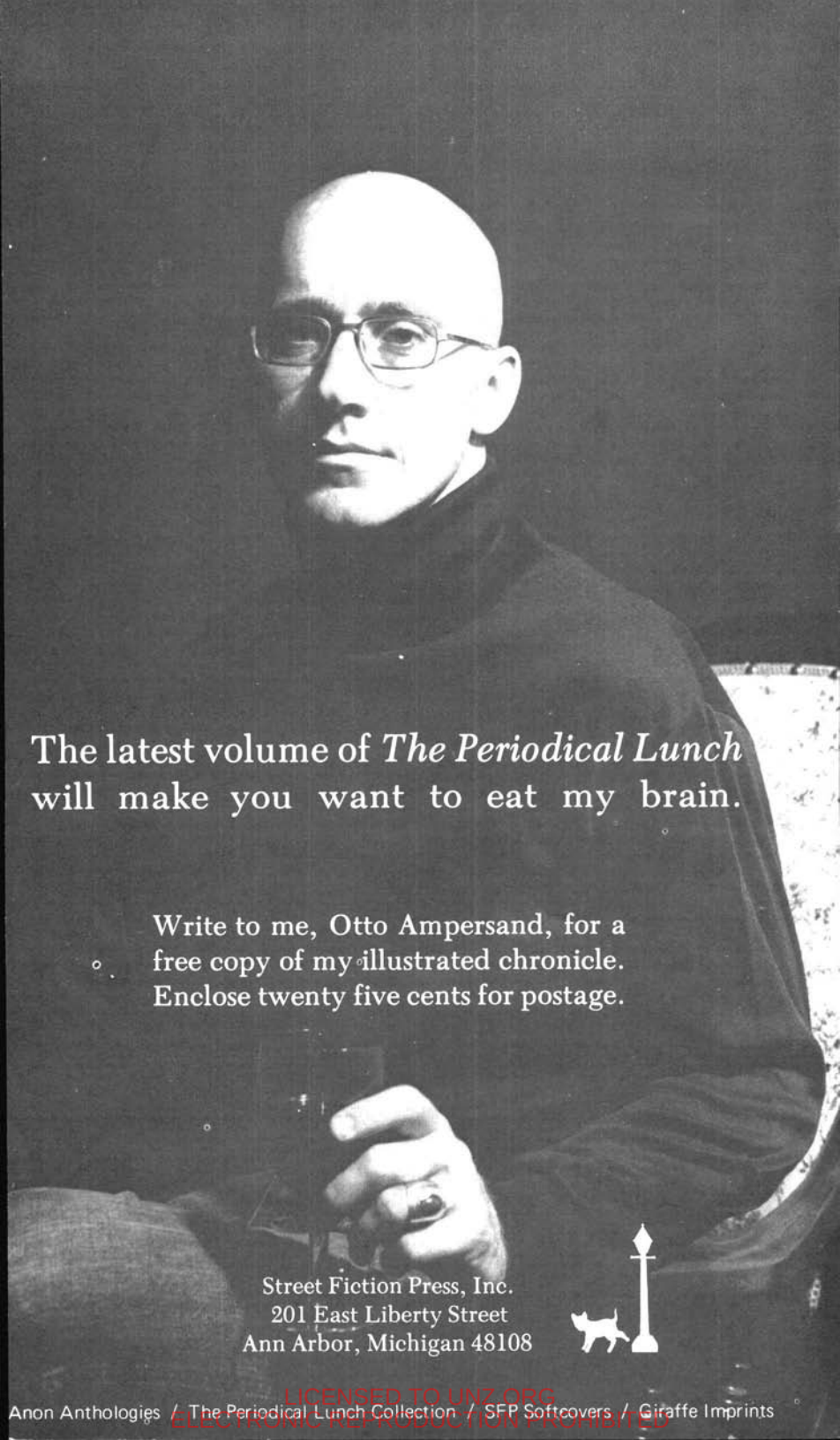

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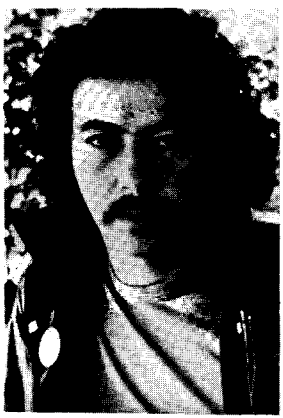

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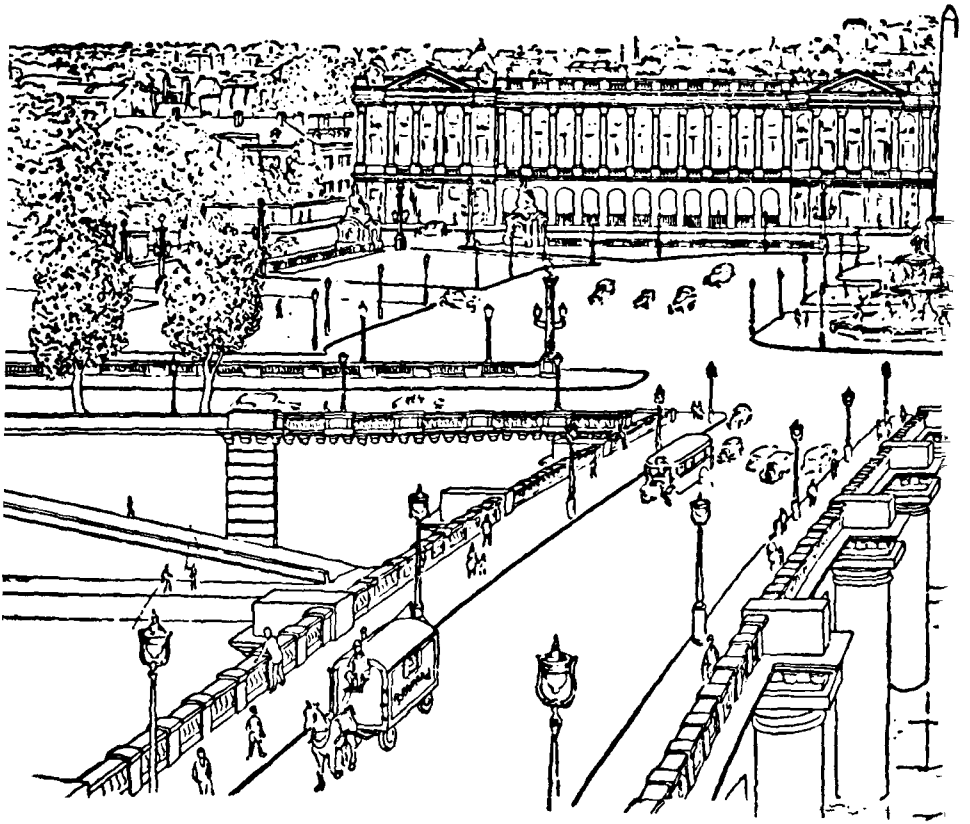

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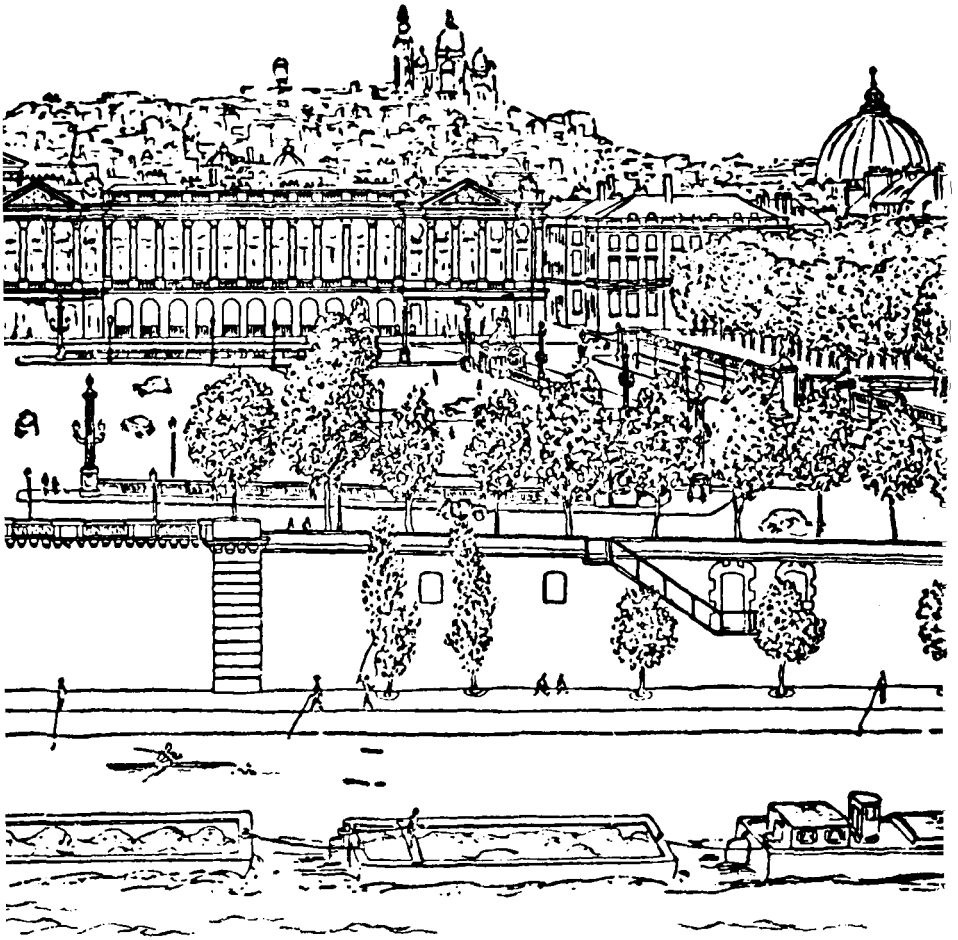

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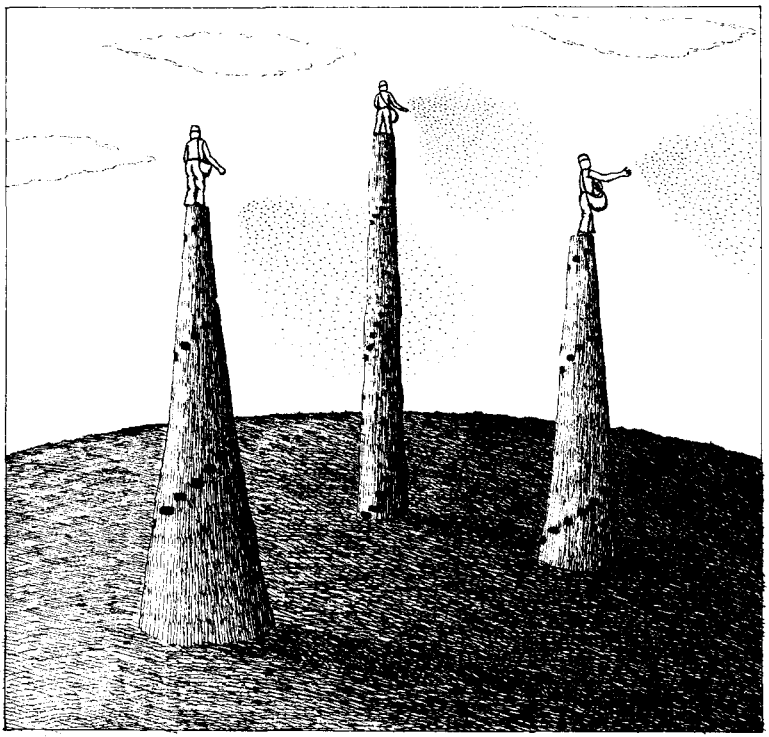

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" 'M' "

Dallas Wiebe

Where darkness is on the rocks of the Morula Mountains, the stars twinkle in the frosty night like stars. Cold winds come from the east and thin snow skitters along over the frozen surface of the old snow. Some pines stand and whir in the gusts. No animals move over the winter meadow in the valley between Mt. Mandrin and Mt. Mentagra. Where bushes protrude, their branches wave and crack in the gusts. Snapping and hissing loll around the hard earth. Stones and boulders mark the meadow like fossils of the old year. You could say the valley "broods," but it is too cold and dark for that kind of folly. Nor is it in the contract.

At the eastern end of the fish-shaped valley, there is a spring named Moria. It rises in a round basin lined with stones and steams in the frigid air, then moves westward, straight across the three-mile-long meadow of the valley. It is the water supply for the fellows and it drains the Morianna Valley west to where it tails away downward. Moria never freezes in its slow rise and run. It never freezes as it divides the meadow in its

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westward motion. It never freezes in its devious descent out of the western edge of the valley into Melena Creek, which descends to the Madarosa River, which ends in the Pacific Ocean.

Around the spring is a circle of twelve huts. Each is fifty feet from the spring and each is painted a different color. Where the spring runs past and between two of them, the southern one is gold. From the gold hut southeast and around they are purple, violet, red, lavender, skyblue, green, yellow, brown, white, gray. Across the stream from the gold cabin and completing the circle is a black one. These are the huts of the twelve men who entered the valley last year because it was unoccupied and built their huts around the spring, Moria, built them from boards and roofing taken from the abandoned buildings of a lead mine, The Mentulagra Star, on the northern wall of the valley. Who entered the unused valley that once had many trees but they were mostly cut down. Once the valley had thick grass, but it was nibbled away by sheep. The soil eroded badly and there was great ruin. Only scavenger animals remained for a time, but soon they too descended to the lower valleys. Because it was unoccupied the wandering fellows entered the valley, found the spring and built their huts of twisted boards and tar paper, painted them their own colors, made each hut a place to sleep and stay warm and little more and then got the contract. Now each hut contains a cot, a small kerosene stove, some blankets, some clothes and an instrument: a gong, a conch shell, a set of cymbals, a ratchet, panpipes, bells, a tambourine, a Jew's harp, a whip, a sistrum, a set of bones or a bullroarer. Each hut has a rug and a cardboard box for storing games. Each hut has a burlap bag to keep money in. One hut has a copy of *The Book of Macula Solaris.*

A candle is lit in the black hut and soon Sphaeromachia steps out into the sizzling darkness. He is dressed in a long black robe with a hood. A rope holds the robe close about him. The robe almost covers his black boots as he shuffles through the deep snow from cabin to cabin. As he goes he rattles two rib bones and cries, "Rack and ruin," into the bleak air. His black beard waggles in the wind, his voice rankles the darkness

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and his cross-eyed gaze measures the urgency of his racked bones and his racking voice. Soon each dwelling has a candle burning in it and who's there rushing to finish half of a peanut butter sandwich left from yesterday's supplies.

The governor, Sphaeromachia, called Mack, stands in the snow anxiously until he sees the rest out and in line. At the head of the line is the dwarf, Beausoleil. He is dressed in a gold robe and holds a bullroarer. Next to him is the giant in purple, Muttertrompeten. When Mack the gov signals by clacking the rib bones, tiny Beau turns to mighty Pete and says, "Wit and wisdom." Pete in his purple robe lifts his gong and says to Phocomelia, "Watch and ward." Mel, in violet, raises his conch shell and says to Puke-stocking, "Time and tide." King, red, says to Fizgig, lavender, "Muck and mire." Fiz says to Anemophilus in skyblue, "Stress and strain." Phil to Roy, Pennyroyal in green, "Sum and substance." Roy to yellow Possenreisser, "Hale and hearty." Knock-kneed, yellow Poss raises his tambourine and says to the hunchback Versipelli, "Fret and fume." Brown Vers addresses the withered left arm of Triskaidekaphobia, "Dig and delve." Tris then speaks to Glossolalia, "Hue and cry." Gloss, in his gray robe, raises his sistrum and stammers through his hairlip, "Beck and call," to the frigid winds.

When the passwords have been given and Mack the gov sees, as well as he can through his floating eyes, that all is in order, he clacks the bones and leads the company towards the eastern end of the valley. They pass between the huts of Anemophilus and Pennyroyal, between skyblue and green, and begin the ascent to the high meadow. It is difficult to go. Sphaeromachia labors to break a trail where they walk each morning. The snow has drifted across the other path. The snow is deep and deeper. Beau wrestles along on his short legs behind Mack. The buck-teeth of Anemophilus ache in the cold. Under his green hood, the cauliflower ears of Pennyroyal sting. He fears frostbite and prays to St. Morpion for protection. Fiz's mammoth forehead bulges out from his lavender hood into the sharp snow. He fears the pain over his eyes. He holds his cog rattle close to keep it warm. Puke-stocking hops along on his clubfoot, right, and

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fears the long fall if he trips. Phocomelia knows too he cannot fall. How would he rise? Where his hands attach to his shoulders there is no leverage.

Out of the eastern mouth of the valley and up the snowy path they go. Up and up the fellows flounder, breath floating across the hard air, until they reach the top of the cut between two peaks, Mt. Melanuria and Mt. Menostaxis. There they pause to look to the west where the buttermilk moon is going down. They look and laugh. They jeer. They hiss and boo. They waggle their tongues. They thumb their noses. They wink and cry, "Go to Hell!" They raise their robes, drop their pants and wiggle their bare asses at the pale fingernail on the other horizon. In the darkness, they fart. They piss on the snow. They yell, "Up your ass" and "Fuck off." They give old Luna the finger. They shake their frozen pricks and grind their hips, humping the fading moon. It sets. There is no light. They button up and clamber on.

They come, sweating, to a mountain meadow called Matrix Unguis, that is covered, crotch-deep, with snow. They measure with the eye the white waste. Mack lifts his black sleeve. He looks to the sky and says, "Rack and ruin." He points to what he thinks is the center of the arena. His black hood waggles. "Dasypus novemcinctus," he mutters into his folded hands and to his icy rib bones. To his crossed eyes, all the world seems hostile. In his weariness and fear he wants the power no more. He resents what is happening to him. He resents the need to go on. He is disgusted with the mindless fellows who follow him. He wants to sleep, to go back, to rest alone and let the darkness be. He resents the punishment in what he must do. He looks up and tries to find in the stars his friend, Monoceros, but his crazy eyes blur it all. His shivering skin tells him he must go on. His pounding heart tells him he has no choice. He kneels, places his forehead on the snow, and prays, "Now I lay me down to sleep . . ." When he rises, he tries to see the eastern horizon and speaks to the wasted world, "Troglodytes aëdon!" Then moves forward.

They wade in in single file to make the circle. Sphaero-

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machia leads and the rest follow in the order of their time into an ever widening and then closing arc. In the holy darkness, they tromp around until they have a circle 365 feet in circumference on the meadow, Matrix Unguis. Beausoleil flounders along and recites, "There was a man of double deed," and cannot see out over the whiteness. He cannot see the giant around the bend. Pennyroyal holds the clapper of his bell and says, "Hector Protector was dressed all in green." Gray Gloss speaks his lines, "There was a lady loved a swine." Phil repeats in his hot stomping, "Christmas is coming the goose is getting fat." All recite what they know and have known and only know: "Bobby Shaftoe," "Doctor Foster," "I saw a fishpond all on fire," "If all the seas were one sea," "I had a little pony," "Doctor Fell," "A diller, a dollar," or "There was an old woman tossed up in a basket." They speak, recite, say, what they know while their crunching feet make in the pure snow a circle in the unyielding night.

When the circle is completed and tromped down for dancing, they space themselves at equal intervals around it and Mack the gov calls for quiet. The rhymes end. In the silence, his voice clatters across the snow. "It is time," he says, and each member of the company takes his instrument from his bag. After they have tuned up for a while, unlimbered the instruments and their fingers, Mack shouts, "Thalarctos maritimus!" and the dance begins. The instruments whine, whir, buzz, twang, snap, crack, rattle, scratch, whistle, bang, moan and clack. The fellows prance, hop, shuffle, around and around until they are warm from their own movements. They dance right; they dance left. They change at the commands of Sphaeromachia in black. Darkness upon and around them, they awaken the empty world with their noise and their motions. They chant, "Come, Sun, come." They chant, "F the night; F the night." They yell, "Two bits, four bits, six bits a dollar, all for the Sun rising stand up and holler." They whoop and howl. "Melanotrichia linguae," shouts Mack; they dance right. They cheer, "We want light; we want light," and "California oranges, Arizona cactus, we let moonlight just for

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the practice," and "Sol, Sol, he's our man, if he can't do it nobody can," and "Rip, rap, ree, hit 'em in the knee; rip, rap, rass, hit 'em with another Sun." Fondly they chant again, "Come, Sun, come."

Around the bouncing men, the darkness begins to give away. The false dawn arrives. The dancing becomes more violent. The conch moans louder. Mack yells "Mareo de la Cordillera," and they dance left. The panpipes whip across the face of Anemophilus like a windshield wiper in a heavy rain. Lavender Fizgig's ratchet whirls in sanguine circles and his waterhead seems to dribble across the snow. Muttertrompeten's purple sleeves set his gong ashiver. From Sphaeromachia now, "Mal de Cayenne," and they dance right. The bullroarer spins over the deep snow. Sistrum and tambourine. Buzzing of the Jew's harp. Cymbals and bones bang into the quiet pines at the edge of the meadow. The white arm that cracks the whip tells the cracking branches of the pines they are not forgotten. Green Pennyroyal's bell claps the dead grass up under the snow.

All things wait on a fine line. There is a balance struck by the cold and the light, by darkness and warmth. "Sol! Sol! He's our man . . . !" If the Sun does not come then the balance is one and all life must end. If it doesn't rise to enliven the world, the polar caps will grow, the glaciers cover the earth and the ice surge once more over the fields. "Two bits, four bits, six bits a dollar . . . !" If it doesn't edge across the horizon, then is the world dead. Then would the seed crack and die. The tree topple. The lily shrivel. Animals and birds flutter down to their sides. The child in the womb shiver off. All love cancelled. All promises ended. All prayers dumb. All joy, knowing and touching cease. "Morbus gallicus" is the command; they speed the dancing and yell, "Rip, rap, ree, hit 'em in the moon . . . !" Where man was will be darkest, endless death. Where life was, the blue case of cold. Containing the silent meadow lark, the black elm, the astonished dolphin, the rigid hyacinth, the stiff impala, the wracked palm, the cringing fields, the haunted mountains, the facile moon, the fossil,

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man. The company dances on. They cheer, "California oranges, Arizona cactus . . . !" Mack shouts, "Mons veneris," and they leap higher to chant, "Come, Sun, come! Come, Sun, come!"

Darkness fades like darkness. Light rises like the Sun. The golden Corona shines brighter on the eastern edge of the world. A fierce red arc ascends slowly and truly. Sphaeromachia screams, "Membrum virile," and the company leaps and howls as one as light bursts across the meadow, Matrix Unguis, and swathes the fellows in its emanations. Sol Invictus peeps across the rim of the Earth to see the dancing company (He likes a good show like anybody else!), comes to hear the sounds of men (He's lonely, too, sometimes.), comes to bless (He hates to be ignored.). (He wants to be friendly.) Now a burning hemisphere. (He adds a great deal to any social gathering.) Now a blazing orb ("Thanks for inviting me." "And thank you for coming.") as light breaks across the mountains and the cities of the plains. Breaks across and into to awaken foolish lovers, to orchestrate the birds, to lead the bull to his cow, the whale to his plankton, the bee to his hive, the man to his oatmeal. Breaks across and into to undo the folly of man, to undo his hate and murder. (Who invited him anyway?) Breaks forth to lead by illumination, to enlighten, to reveal. (Heavens, I've never seen such nasty behavior at our parties.) Breaks forth to touch and stir, to move and make. (Harold, if you don't throw him out I will.) Breaks forth to laughter. Sol Invictus breaks forth in jiggling, raucous joy. The unconquerable, timid Sun drops around to see what's happening. Brings his own in lascivious chance.

When the Sun is fully risen, the gov stops the sweating dancers. They kneel. Sphaeromachia intones the litany of St. Morpion, the litany for that day, the shortest day of the year. He intones the rule of light and the sacrifice needed. He praises the presence of Sol Invictus. He gives thanks for the fish-shaped valley where they live and for the sacred spring. He asks a blessing on them and on the helicopter. They rise and Mack ends it all by saying simply, "It is accomplished."

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Exhausted and beginning to shiver, they return, hurly-burly, to their huts by the spring, Moria, where Mack enters his hut, returns with the sacred text of St. Morpion, *The Book of Macula Solaris*. He hands it to the dwarf, Beausoleil, who will be gov until January 20. Beau reads one section of the 365 and the listeners murmur in agreement. They drink from the spring, take the cold water for fealty, and rest into the long afternoon.

When the Sun is near the western horizon and the golden light lies straight across the snowy meadow, the fellows hear the lazy flutter of the silver helicopter, hear it paddle up the lower canyon. They rise from their rugs, put on their robes and go outside to watch the glass bubble leap over the edge of the meadow. It circles the landing spot and drops in a spewing of snow. Twelve neat packets are dumped out and the chopper rises into the mackerel sky. The packets lie on the powdery snow like black fossils. When the fellows open them, they find, each, a jar of kerosene, a peanut butter sandwich, an apple, a half-pint carton of milk, one candy bar, a pair of clean underwear and a clean pair of socks, one candle and $1,000 in Monopoly money. Each takes his packet back to his hut where he eats his apple and half of his sandwich, drinks his half pint of milk, takes for dessert his Milky Way candy bar. When the food and drink are accomplished, each counts his money to make sure he has the right amount, adds it to the pile of money in the burlap bag, adds it to the mass that he will invest on the day when the Earth freezes over. When darkness comes, each lights his candle and tries to recite lines from *The Book of Macula Solaris* until he is sleepy. Each light blinks out anon, leaving as the only light the stars which twinkle in the frosty night like stars.

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Daniel Mark Epstein

IN A FREE COUNTRY

In a free country I would be shot for my thoughts of you.
Where thought was free as radio waves
    my mind would broadcast your outrageous beauty.
Naked phantoms of our wild nights
    would take every mind by storm.
In your name the slaves of industry and commerce
    would revolt, cops would strike,
truck drivers walk off whistling from their loads.
All creatures of the earth would drop their pants
    in tribute, they would fornicate pell-mell,
every man, queen, woman, dyke and child.
The old would have the young, every mother her son.
And I would be hunted down, my brain quarantined
    in a free country, thinking these last thoughts of you.

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Ricardo da Silveira Lobo Sternberg

ABOUT THE SPELL CAST ON MEN BY THE PHOTOGRAPH OF THE TWO GRANDDAUGHTERS OF DONA YVONNE

What life
after the photograph
of the granddaughters
of Dona Yvonne?

The eye grows cloudy
the will grows weak
the voice melts in the throat
and the grown-up man
sobs densely as a child.

There is no cure,
no consolation
after the photograph;
only a deep well of drink
down which to throw oneself,
the moon to howl at
and the memory of the life
lived before the spell.

And how could one
hemmed-in on the sofa
and circled by goodwill
suspect the gentle matron
who passed us photographs
with a charming smile?

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No hope
after the photograph
of the granddaughters
of Dona Yvonne.

Someone
should do something.
A law must be passed
enjoining Dona Yvonne
from sowing despair
in living-rooms
across four continents.

Until then:
steal the photograph
and burn it
on the slow fire
of green wood.

It is said
that the ash
rubbed across the chest
alleviates
the cardiac despair.

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George Bogin

CALAMINE LOTION

On May 11th, 1943, my father, terminal,
hugged me at home in a New York blackout
and kissed me in his bathrobe goodbye forever
as I left for Oregon, furlough over.
On June 14th, I awoke in the barracks
with a rash on my thighs
due to the local lava dust.
By noon there was an invasion of the papules
into other areas
so I walked down the company street
to the battalion medics
for some calamine lotion.
The Three Sisters, snow-capped,
glistened in the sun.
There was no calamine lotion.
After supper I walked the stretch
to the Station Hospital
in my S.O.P., O.D. torture trousers
and asked again.
Not a drop in the shop, the captain said.
Give this soldier
a subcutaneous shot of adrenalin.
Rash'll be gone in three minutes.
Wrong. So the captain ordered bandages
with a white salve thick as cream cheese
taped to my body livid as lox.
I shuffled out like a cowboy with the clap
into the great Oregon sky show.
Pink gold lavender. Fragrance of fir.
Ten thousand little green men
watching on the Deschutes River.
I stripped in the road
and dumped the bandages into a GI can.
Next day the phone call. Father dead.
Emergency furlough. Drug store in Portland.
Calamine lotion. Instant relief.

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Three Poems by Marc Lecard

SOLICITATION WALTZ

No thank you I don't want
to break stones till dawn with a rubber mallet and
no I don't want to live in a toy drum
or bake my last will and testament inside a wedding-cake,
please believe me

No, thank you, thank you
I have all I want
no I don't need you
salesmen selling mortuary fountains
stones that speak in several languages
motorized foreskins and bedroom appliances
no thank you I don't want to spend my life
giving extreme unction to a crowd of toads

my room is not a testing-ground
for the creation of inflatable tombs
or the teaching of german to tulips

no thank you dead man
you can keep your coffin filled with roses

I don't need you
doors opening into empty lots
windows opening on an abyss
highways leading to an open grave

no thank you no thank you no thank you

don't call me
I'll call you.

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THE PARTY

At the party: they surround him and his chair.

"So it was in the morning, then,
that you first put this hat on your knees?"

"Yes. I put my hat on my knees.
You couldn't move it with a sledgehammer."

So they try and dislodge it, one at a time at first,
then hundreds, swinging metal implements.

The hat cracks, but remains firm.

The torso begins to fall away, a piece at a time, like
mud breaking up on the floor of a well abandoned by its
water. The hands go, then the feet.

The hat remains.

Long after the party breaks up, the torso broken up, the
head in small fragments containing eyes and whiskers on
the floor, the arms in shards, the chair itself beginning
to give up the ghost

Long after these occurences, the hat remains firmly on
the knees.

Later, a triumphant head emerges.

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PROSE

''Alas,'' he thinks, ''a perfect day for a walk.''·
But first he steps outside to take a look.

They look back at him from manholes, eyes and
fingers on the edge.

There are many.

He closes the door, and throws his hat on the bed.
Today at least he has one good reason for not going out.

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Three Poems by Louis Simpson

A NOTE ABOUT THREE POEMS:

For years I have been interested in people with delusions, especially of the type called "paranoid." It was only recently, however, that I discovered Salvador Dali's "paranoia-criticism." In *La Femme Visible* (1930) Dali announced that it was becoming possible to "systematize the confusion and to contribute to the total discrediting of the world of reality." This would be accomplished by paranoia-criticism, a "spontaneous method of irrational knowledge."

Paranoia imposes its own vision on the external world; it differs from other kinds of visionary experience in that the paranoid wants others to share his view—even insists on it. Paranoia is very like poetic creativity. This accounts for my fascination with certain people in whom this state of mind was evident: "characters" met by chance, whose words and gestures would haunt me for years until, finally, in a poem I was able to dispel them.

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THE HOUR OF FEELING

Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth:
—It is the hour of feeling.

Wordsworth, "To My Sister"

A woman speaks:
"I hear you were in San Francisco.
What did they tell you about me?"

She begins to tremble. I can hear the sound
her elbow made, rapping on wood.
It was something to see and to hear—
not like the words that pass for life,
things you read about in the papers.

People who read a deeper significance
into everything, every whisper . . .
who believe that a knife crossed with a fork
are a signal . . . by the sheer intensity
of their feeling leave an impression.

And with her, tangled in her hair,
came the atmosphere, four walls,
the avenues of the city
at twilight, the lights going on.

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When I left I started to walk.
Once I stopped to look at a window
displaying ice skates and skis.
At another with Florsheim shoes . . .

Thanks to the emotion with which she spoke
I can see half of Manhattan,
the canyons and the avenues.

There are signs high in the air
above Times Square and the vicinity:
a sign for Schenley's Whiskey,
for Admiral Television,
and a sign saying Milltag, whatever that means.

I can see over to Brooklyn and Jersey,
and beyond there are meadows,
and mountains and plains.

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THE REJECTED

I tried to explain why his manuscript had been rejected:
the writing was sincere, brilliant in places,
but our readers felt it would not appeal
to many people. It was too personal.

While I spoke he kept looking around.
A few feet away, the publicity woman
had stopped to talk to the office manager.
He seemed to think they were talking about him.

He told me that for years
X—naming a famous novelist—
had been entering his apartment
in his absence, and stealing his ideas.

I concluded by saying that I was sorry.
He took his glasses off and wiped them.
He shuffled the chapters, making them square.
Then, finally, he left.

I saw him again, months later
on Forty-Second Street, looking up
at something he saw in a window,
or at the signs for tires and whiskey.

Since then I have envisioned him,
as Wordsworth says, wandering continually
from Twentieth Street up to Sixtieth,
and across from Eighth to Lexington Avenue.

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THE SUN AND THE MOON

"If the Sun and Moon should doubt,
They'd immediately go out."

When I try to think what they have in common
I have to say, paranoia.

An unshakeable belief in their own importance . . .
They see what they desire.

Certainly, life would be a lot simpler.
You have to be mad, that's the catch.

As it is, I have no one to blame but myself.
I sit down to write . . .

An hour later the table is covered with words.
And then I start crossing them out.

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Edwin Brock

A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

If you put one leg
ahead of your body
balance on it and swing
the other you move
a yard forward

this takes one second
of your life.

If you put one sunrise
ahead of your vision
balance on it and swing
forward you move
into nightfall

this takes one day
of your life.

Similarly weeks
months and years
may be annihilated
with practice

until a lifetime
passes without pain.

The trick is in balance
and momentum
always keeping your eyes
on horizons and your mind
on a goal

until moving demonstrates
horizons and goals.

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Mostly you will travel
through people
without contact
for contact is not
essential to progress

but in event of contact
it must be swift
heavy and irreversible
so that momentum
is not checked

this technique
once acquired
will carry you through
all institutions
whether domestic
or social.

Failures will occur
through striking others
when off balance
or catching an eye
at point of contact

this causes relationship
and breaks momentum.

Try always
to sleep deeply
and without dreaming
remembering
when dreams occur
that they have
no meaning

dress well
eat well and be
always moving
for there are horizons
everywhere
continually travelling
at your own good speed.

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Monsieur Teste in America

Andrei Codrescu

AN ARRIVAL AND THE NECESSITY OF IT

At 29 years of age, completely satisfied with the gentle Fall outside, with vast stretches of contentment ahead of me in an unbroken melloyello greenery, I took my head in my hands and I considered my position. I WAS BORED IN HEAVEN!

At first, unbelieving, I tried to go on with my daily routines which just at the moment they could have secured my nights, got blasted by this realization. "Oh, daily routines," I cried at them as they filled with void, "please do not abandon me! I am only trying to conquer my ambitions, to set my greed to rest in the cool shade of its immediate demands, to give my need for worship a little rest & nostalgia (R & G), to lure the beast of my lust back into the zoo where it belongs, to silence my mind to the point where stupidity *will* be my strong point, to shut up in general, and to shrink physically in particular." Unresponsive to my passionate plea the daily routines began disintegrating.

With this crisis pending and with the rains not far off I opened the part of my brain containing the past and let it spill

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in great globular formations across my closed eyes. My past, tied in neat bundles, each bundle with its own conclusion written in red ink on the face of it, obeyed me gently like a river when the PG & E plant moves away. Or closes shop.

Who was I? Was I bored in Heaven because I was not I? Or was I bored because Heaven wasn't I? Was I boredom or was I Heaven? Was I in Heaven for being I on earth? Or was I to be on earth as the conclusion of Heaven? It was hard to decide.

When I came to America, to Norte America, I needed someone to counsel me in the simple secrets. I did not know such a person. Older exiles who, as myself, had come here without speaking a word of English, guarded their simple secrets carefully because their vampiric ambitions depended on them. A man might have 3 simple secrets by the age of 45 if he emigrated at the age of 20. A 60 year old man who emigrated at 15 might have 6 simple secrets. I didn't have any and no one gave me theirs. I had to go at it alone, something I have a horror of. I don't even like going to the bathroom alone.

O Lord! I cannot imagine living without simple secrets!

Well, it took me 3 years to learn it (a history of academic excellence) but I did. Here it is:

AMERICA IS EXACTLY THE WAY IT SEEMS TO BE.
THERE ARE NO HIDDEN INTENTIONS.

To a European this is inconceivable. The whole idea denies the fundamentals of experience. It is like listening to a dog laugh. Notice the old Hungarian lady waiting for the bus. She does not wait for the bus in the square clearly marked BUS STOP. She runs ahead of the bus before it has even stopped. The black busdriver shoos her away furiously. She goes back to the allotted area for boarding (she still does not believe it!), gets on the bus and starts a long harrangue about the driver's rudeness. "I know my place," she says, "you should know yours!" As you can see, she is speaking about human places. Hers & His. Nowhere does it occur to her that there is *a place for boarding*. She does not believe that objects mean what they say. Her definition of objects is *that which is put in front of a woman to mislead her.* If you ask her who put the object there

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she will laugh. Other people, of course. The hidden intentions of the sign BUS STOP are as clear to her as his watch is to the driver. BUS STOP in her country does not mean BUS STOP. It means also: *crowds, place, age, a public appearance, social position, a lady, engagements.*

Take this same lady and say "chocolate" to her. She will immediately have a vision of rare pleasure. Take the nearest American and say "chocolate" to her. It will mean only *a trip to the drugstore.*

On the other hand, if you seriously pull this lady aside and say "Jim" to her or "Elma" or "Gertrude", she will naturally ask the real questions: is he/she married yet? Do they have children? What are the latest scandals? It would never occur to her to impute an area of shadowy intentions to a person. Objects are the only guilty party. People are blameless to the extent that, although they put the objects there, they understand that it's only a game.

So, the first simple secret that it took me 3 years to learn was, as I have said, this:

AMERICA CAN BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED. THE OBVIOUS IS VERY SERIOUS ABOUT ITSELF HERE.

In Europe, I knew, the obvious did not exist. It had been riddled with holes there. An intelligent person is supposed to look through these holes before taking a step. And in Europe everybody is intelligent. Except the peasants, of course. But then they are objects anyway.

This one simple secret seemed to me so precious that for the next 6 years or so I did nothing but bathe in the sunny obviousness of America. (I made quite a bit of money too.)

Then I became suspicious again. Here was I, 21 years old. If America is so obvious, I thought, how does she do it? A fatal question, friends, and I only hope for your sake that you are all Americans and never have to ask that. I looked at the ads for edification. I turned on the television. My living room floor was littered with newspapers. I took apart the house appliances. Then I didn't look at ads, TV, newspapers or appliance innards any longer and I instantly forgot what I saw in the ads,

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TV, newspapers and appliances. And thus, with the swiftness of electroshock, I comprehended a *second* simple secret:

DON'T LOOK BACK! THEY MIGHT BE GAINING ON YOU!

This is when I began my long affair with the American language. If everything was obvious and firmly progressive it meant, naturally, that the language was a virgin expanse of snow on which my footsteps, if firm enough, could lead the rescuing party to me. So you see the psychological basis on which this affair thrived: I planned to use, yes, use the innocence of the language to further my aims which were neither more nor less than cracking the safe holding all the simple secrets of America. (Think of all the money I was going to make!)

O what a language! Contagious words imbued with mass-market meanings like a sponge full of ink crowded my mind to dictate their grammar to me! This grammar I was, of course, cautious to disregard as any lover would disregard his beloved's family if they didn't approve. Grammar did not approve of me so I didn't approve of grammar, and I continued in spite of its protestations to love the language to distraction. With one move I would suck the structural juice of grammar and spit it on the ground while with another move I would gather brilliant clusters of adjectives to my bosom and caress them into action. I discovered, o tender passion, that one is never alone with words in America. Vast masses of people accompanied each word to its place in the dictionary. These masses did what I did, ate what I ate, thought what I thought. The words of America's language brought me an incalculable dowry. They put at my disposal all the natives of the Norte America continent to dispose of them as I saw fit. I was not anxious to hide from these folks even though I could never be intimate with my beloved. I despise intimacy and the bourgeois heart of it. I loved to sit still, surrounded by words truly open like transparent glass buildings without any doors in and out of which thousands of people jumped into their obvious business.

"If I could just have your words forever, my tongue," I

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whispered, "to fit them to my good intentions like silencers to guns, I could, conceivably, own the continent."

Above my bed, during this affair (we rarely left the bed, my darling and I) stood this injunction by Bill Knott:

PEOPLE WHO GET DOWN ON THEIR KNEES TO ME ARE THE ANSWERS TO MY PRAYERS

But alas no human passion is made to last. Like eggs, passions must be stuck in a refrigerator of the spirit and this I was not willing to do.

At the age of 24 I began to lose my enchantment. (And I wasn't making any money. A good agency of the government (Welfare) understood my plight and saw to it that I sat in bed but it didn't pay much.)

Also, around this time, a tremendous nostalgia began to quake in me. I could barely remember my native tongue and I missed the fabulous capacity for abstraction that I had had before coming to America.

In this depressed state I moved into the wilderness, resolving to never speak, want or ask for anything. The wilderness had served this purpose beautifully until today when, looking at the purple & gold noose in the clouds above the ocean, I realized this horror: I AM BORED IN HEAVEN!

There was someone I knew who had the cure to my ills. It was the mentor of my youth, the man most responsible for setting the tender bones of my mind in the position in which they are now, the man who inspired me with his shining example, the man to whom I owed my ability to think: Monsieur Teste.

Summoning the remains of my strength I dragged myself to the tiny Post Office of the nearest forgotten community (a nouveau old town inhabited by the nouveau poor) and I dictated the following telegram to the startled postmistress whose siesta had never until then been interrupted:

MONSIEUR TESTE stop PLEASE COME TO stop AS stop YOU ALWAYS stop HAD stop PARIS stop EUROPE

Two days later, the postmistress, terrified, unable to control her gothic features from glowing in the moonlight, appeared

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at the window of my modest treehouse and handed me the following:

ARRIVING stop IN NEW YORK stop BY BOAT stop APRIL 13 1974 stop MONSIEUR TESTE stop

I was 29 years old that day.

*

New York with its usual disagreeable sense of humor lay under the General Strike like an actress under a Foreign Legionnaire.

It was an ominous sign and downright depressing when I realized that Monsieur Teste had arrived but could not get off the boat because nobody would lower the gangplanks. There I sat, straining my eyes past the Statue of Liberty, trying to catch a glimpse of my saviour among the black dots the fog jotted around the liner CALYPSO. The America Monsieur Teste was going to step on at the end of the strike was not the America I had found at my arrival. In my time, in 1966, America was a cluster of bubbles fighting to boil its human stew in a combination of exotic spices: buddhism, mysticism, marxism, etc. Now, in 1974, the ground was solid, the stew had been eaten and the people of America lay on their backs digesting quietly while murmuring, in unison: DOWN WITH ECCENTRICITY! BACK TO REALISM! Only realism did not upset the stomach. God was not in fashion any more. Survival was.

I was curious to see how Monsieur Teste would take it. He was not used to politeness. And originality was on the wane.

When I finally had the chance to say "Welcome, Monsieur Teste", three days later, and hand him the bag of grapefruit I thought would stand for flowers, my curiosity had reached its boiling point.

He walked slowly across the deck, tall, skinny, grimfaced, dressed in a 3-piece suit with an artificial zinnia in the lapel. Although he was walking in my direction he looked insistently to his left side as if he had dropped his watch in the water. When he came close he lifted a pale blue set of eyes, planted

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them into my own brown ones and took the bag of grapefruit out of my hand without a word. I took his suitcase, which was very light (Monsieur Teste travelled as he had always with only a toothbrush, an aluminum canteen filled with mineral water and a complicated mathematical instrument laid carefully at the bottom of a small velvet-lined case) and he took my hand, which was very sweaty (since my earliest childhood) and thus, hand in hand, we put our 4 feet at once down on the New Land. I had the curious feeling that I too was arriving to America for the first time. Everything looked unfamiliar. It's Teste's immediate influence, I thought. Without a word he had already begun teaching me my old ways.

"Well, what do you think?" I said, including with a sweeping gesture the tall towers of Manhattan, the deserts of Nevada, my treehouse in California, my efforts at understanding and my present bafflement.

He didn't answer. He didn't make a gesture either because he had, as I knew, killed his puppet as far back as 1923. I would have given my kingdom just then for a clenching of his fist.

Later, sitting in one of those "luncheonettes" for which New York is justly famous, I ordered two bowls of blood red cabbage borscht for Teste and myself. In silence, with a collective mouth, we set ourselves upon the blood red liquid and shlurped intimately at each other like waves lapping on a beach. We were off to a good start. Monsieur Teste rose.

"The unknown makes me shit well," he said, by way of his first words in Norte America.

While he did his business in there I let contentment spread through my bones which together with the warmth generated by the borscht squeaked in utter delight. My bones! It was the first time since coming to this country that I had thought of my bones. Like a loose screw within the machinery of my own body I had been malfunctioning without knowing it. How could a man live without feeling his bones? I had missed everything.

Teste returned, we paid and, in the taxi taking us to the airport where our plane for California waited, I leaned my tense head on Teste's bony shoulder and watched the neon of

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New York light up. It was going to be an idyll between us, yes, sir. No one and nobody would come between us.

"How long are you going to stay, mon Teste?" I said.

Wordlessly, he pointed to the meter of the taxi which was just then hovering between 29 and 30, miles or dollars I don't know, and when 30 finally became firm, he lowered his index. Ah, 30 . . . But 30 what? 30 days? 30 weeks? 30 years? 30 minutes?

"30 what?" I said, "30 days, 30 weeks, 30 years, 30 minutes?"

"30 times," he said.

"Oh?!"

"I will stay until you have insulted me 30 times. Then I will leave."

"I will never insult you, Monsieur Teste," I cried out.

"One," he said.

*

On the plane I kept silent, calculating feverishly the many ways in which I would keep myself from insulting Teste. I would never refer to him without the polite Monsieur before his name. I would never talk politics. I would ignore the strangeness of his body. I would this and I would that. I had 29 times left and I planned to use insults sparingly. I wanted Teste with me as long as possible. And if, I thought with cynical smugness, I get tired of him I could always insult him really fast 29 times in a row and hasten his departure tremendously. But then I felt so guilty for allowing this thought to cross my sorry mind that I grimly clenched my smugness and pulled out a lock of my hair in self-retaliation. Teste was silent also. It was hard for me to tell whether he enjoyed the quiet night flight or whether he was listening to some internal rumbling. Before I could decide, the stewardess approached inside a teased platinum blond cloud and handed us glasses full of Coca Cola like red raindrops out of the magnanimity of her heart. I could have kissed and embraced her for her fertilizing

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appearance but I refrained from it when I saw Monsieur purse his lips, close one eye, put the straw behind his ear and spill the Coke at my feet. If I hadn't seen the deliberateness of it I might have thought the incident accidental. But I was sure he had done it on purpose. Why? To make me insult him? Absurd! Presently, the platinum blond cloud folded in neat halves and two white branches shot out of her plumpness and began groping blindly at my feet with a yellow paper towel, the end of which looked like a sail and, suddenly, I understood! Monsieur had created the incident in order to make me aware that other things beside platinum clouds filled with red raindrops existed. There were, in this marvelous world, also platinum blond clouds filled with red raindrops navigating at our feet with yellow sails. Oh Teste! I love you!

Not much else happened on the plane and soon, we saw the blue lights of San Francisco carpeting the earth like a cemetery of fresh ghosts signalling to the stars which were, you've guessed it, us.

Ah, what times awaited us! What mounds of blueberries! What terrors of filament! What corrections! What complete misuse! What tremendous erections! What filmy collaterals! What love! What caprice! What torrents! What torrential injections! What adjectives! What perceptions! Raining upward, the lights of San Francisco filled me with the elan of a god whose immortality rests in his insults! A human whose love depends on a shut mouth! A monster whose ears must stay open all the time! A Lilliputian tied to the head sperm in the spermpack of a giant about to shoot his load in the belly of time! What felicity!

*

The coffee was cozily percolating, the sunlight lanced the dust motes in the air. We were sitting on the rug, in my pleasant little San Francisco apartment (I keep one in the city), Teste and I, exchanging significant glances though their significance was vastly increased, no doubt, by my interpre-

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tations of them. I read a thousand meanings in his slightest movement and each one of these meanings enriched my life enormously, inexplicably. When, finally, we decided to talk it was at a level decidedly lower than the one I had just experienced.

"What's your watch worth?" I said, noticing an expensive gold watch on his wrist.

"It is the most expensive watch in the world," he said, "it is my one and only admission that the world exists. An expensive admission. One must never admit anything but if one has no choice, as in the case of time, one must not admit cheaply."

"An admission is an admission," I said, "What does it matter if the signature under a man's confession is set with diamonds or not. He has confessed, that's all."

"You are wrong, mon chou. If a man could sign his confession in diamonds he would lend magnificence to his admission. He should, at least, sign with great care and a feeling of the absolute."

"Value," he continued, "is a defense of the unattainable. All things must be expensive. Things are an admission of man's impotence. They must not come cheap."

"The people are poor," I said.

"The people are bored," replied Monsieur.

"At least they aren't private," I countered.

He thought about this for a moment then reminded me of a fact I had forgotten:

"I am minding my own business."

With great pleasure I proceeded to describe to him how minding one's own business was not possible in America and how this wasn't really a bad thing because while it was true that others delved into one's business it was also possible for one to delve into others' business and *that*, you will grant, is the supreme pleasure of a democracy.

"What about music?" he cried, "And dance?"

"That is true," I readily agreed, "In America all art forms are in the service of literature. Their job is to fatten up the words."

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I showed him gorgeously illustrated art & music magazines in which the language, obviously inspired by the fact that no one had been there before, took off in fat and happy ways, exploding here and there around a comma only to redress itself and masturbate endlessly. I showed him dancers kneeling before reviews of their own work as if seeing themselves in a mirror for the first time. There was no endeavour, creative or crafty that did not aim its crippled heart at the dartboard of print.

Monsieur Teste showed no sign that he saw what I was showing him. He said:

"These people speak in complete sentences!"

There was so much contempt in his voice, I did not understand.

"The infinite," he said, "is a great influence on unfinished sentences."

That is true. I had been blind. Infinity was demanding my apologies. I turned toward the coffee maker which sat on the window sill and looking vaguely at the gorgeous clouds, I murmured my excuses.

*

April 16, 1974

I masturbated as I got up. Monsieur Teste said:

"You are getting old. Instead of strangers you fantasize about great lays of yesteryear."

"I beg your pardon," I said, "There was, in all those lays, a stranger I hadn't noticed at the time."

At breakfast, Monsieur Teste had a raw egg and a carrot. I asked him why.

"Entrusting your discoveries to language is like giving information to the wrong spy."

"But how else could you answer my question?"

Swiftly, he half-rose from his chair and plopped the yet uneaten raw egg into my face while, with his other hand, he

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thrust the carrot in my mouth which had fallen open from shock & surprise.

I told him, as I wiped off the goo, that it's possible to fool the language without resorting to action. He looked at me contemptously and got himself another egg from the refrigerator which he left open to stare into for the rest of his breakfast.

During the afternoon I was so exhilerated to have him unveil the simple secrets of America for me, that I told him:

"This will be a fruitful time for me. Thank you."

"In the first place," he said, "don't ever thank me. The Japanese have seven ways of saying 'thank you' and each one implies a certain degree of resentment."

"In the second place," he continued, "I like the word 'fruitful.' "

He proceeded to tell me the story of a conference he had once participated in:

"After having said many things to each other during the conference, the gentlemen bowed their various heads and took off for parts unknown, some to the women's bathrooms and some to little restaurants in the neighborhood."

"It had not been a lost day. It had been fruitful and each and everyone carried the fruit of it in his heart. Some carried pears, others carried figs, others draped limp bananas over their biceps while yet others could be seen with mangos. 'Seen', that is, through the look in their eyes. But the hearts these gentlemen carried inside were all identical. Each heart carried four chambers and each chamber was loaded with fruit.

"When the gentlemen played Russian Roulette, later that afternoon, they aimed their hearts at their heads and pressed the trigger. Death, for the winners, consisted in the fruit taking root in the brain. 'Life is a fruit in the heart of an empty brain' was the motto of this session. Death, therefore, is a last minute rush for vitamins.

"Every time a fruitful conference takes place the gentlemen age a little and this conference was no exception. It seemed

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that other gentlemen's emanations made the gentlemen older. If the gentlemen would be left alone from birth to death this ageing process would not occur. But nobody allows the gentlemen to play solitaire, least of all the gentlemen themselves. So the gentlemen want to be wolves. Can you blame them?''

''My God,'' I said, ''it occurs to me that information works for death.''

''A hired hand, cher.''

''But what was the subject of this conference?''

Monsieur Teste lit a cigarette, looked at me with merciful pity and said:

''Anyone found frowning on the new god Chemistry will not be pulled out of the crucible in time for the party.'' Then slowly, he added: ''Two.''

*

April 17

I had a horrendous dream last night. I dreamt that Monsieur Teste wasn't real. I was terrified. But then the following solution offered itself to me: *Unreal people never exercise benevolence. They exist in the interim.*

There was a poem in the newspaper today. Monsieur and I read it together:

It's tough to be doing what you don't
find easy
it's easy it's really easy
to do what you want
the body takes the lead
over the head
the heart swings the whip
the body is hip
the head is dead

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I expected Teste to fly out in a rage. "Teste" means *head* (in my opinion) and I thought the poem insulted this part of the body. Instead, Teste was rather pleased. He said that Teste does not mean *head* and it never meant *testes* but it will always mean *taste*.

I thought I noticed a spark of eroticism in Teste. But I was mistaken. He was merely sticking his tongue in and out of his mouth to see how far it would go.

Allah be praised! Last night, as we lay on our bunks, Monsieur Teste told me his opinion of truth. He told me of the high regard he had for the truth. It is precisely because of this regard that he lied all the time. But, in his own words:

"I lie in order to hide the truth from morons. It's the morons I have to keep in the dark. Did you ever notice that when a moron steps into the light from a let's say dark room the light doesn't seem to matter any more. The moron brings the darkness with him. All morons carry dark rooms. Why did the moron tiptoe past the medicine cabinet? There are people who claim that enlightening the morons is the greatest thing anyone can do. These people are morons themselves. Crypto-morons. And it's because there are crypto-morons around that one has to hide the truth at all cost. The crypto-morons love to get to the truth in order to pass it on to the obvious morons who then proceed to draw conclusions. This is how you can tell a moron from a non-moron. The morons always draw conclusions. Whenever there are more than three humans in a room the moron among them will reveal himself by drawing conclusions. This is all detailed in my pamphlet: *How to catch a moron*. Some morons are so eager to draw conclusions that they don't even wait for something to draw conclusions from. They pull them out of thin air. These particular morons are not dangerous. They draw their conclusions and, if left alone, they will not bother anybody. But if they have even a single fan, watch out! It's the morons who work over a bit of ma-

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terial however that are to be most feared. Scientists are the foremost example of this type of moron . . .

*

April 18

I must admit, after he'd gone to sleep, I became worried about Monsieur Teste. He might not survive his sojourn in America. He'd barely been here 5 days and he had already begun to abandon large portions of the language. I could not for example, induce Teste to say "pepsi". That he hadn't yet abandoned the entire American language was due, no doubt, only to the resiliency of a few abstract words for sentiment which weren't much in vogue and on the backs of which Teste hoped to slide unobserved by the everawake collectivism of the language.

"Don't worry," Teste said when I dropped my angst on him next day, "My real ally is the resiliency of subjunctives. I am not, properly speaking, abandoning the language, I am merely watching the language abandon itself after it passes through the torture chamber in my lower belly."

Good for the subjunctives! They had a lot of nerve. I would hate to lose Teste at this critical stage in our relationship.

He didn't say a word all afternoon. We took a walk and, thinking to please him, I pointed out several objects and repeated their names like a child:

"Trolley car. Salami. Lady."

I knew what he was thinking. He thought that I was deliberately setting out to destroy the uniqueness of objects by naming them. In light of his opinion of morons I realized that I had walked into the ballroom faux-pas first.

When we got home he gave me a demonstration of how to deal with names. He pointed to the coffee maker and said "floor", to the fruit-bowl and said "foot". Then he looked smug and satisfied. Since there were no morons around I felt most definitely insulted. What's he take me for? I'm not a moron. I know a fruit-bowl from a foot. The strangeness of

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our state hit me. Here I was, stepping lightly through the thorns in order not to insult him and with every insult he dealt me I felt myself to be more and more successful. The more he insulted *me* the less capable I was of insulting *him*. He was denying the law of communicating vases with the aplomb of a peasant.

In the evening we had visitors. The swinger couple Johnson. The two of them are the embodied American principle: Both Sides Of The Question. This principle, taken from television, took in the Johnsons the appalling form of a tremendously fast rush to make decisions followed immediately by counter-decisions. An evening with the Johnsons amounted to nothing in the end because as soon as the Johnsons did something they analyzed it to death instantly. They were swingers but they swung away from each other. As soon as the male Johnson took off his clothes, the female Johnson put on her coat, and, as neither Teste nor I did anything, he hastily put his clothes back on as the female Johnson walked out of hers. As soon as she took her clothes off I took off mine and looked as she put hers back on only to be followed by the male Johnson dutifully taking his off at which point I put mine back on and watched as the process swung inevitably toward futility, all this time keeping an eye on Teste who opened the refrigerator door and began what now amounted to an addiction with him: staring into the depths of it.

The female Johnson also made sure that her words enveloped her in an impenetrable cloak of boredom while she was nude while pulling syllables like foreskins out of words when she had her clothes on, a process which the male Johnson reproduced in his way by a series of grunts modulated to go AC/DC at respectively wrong times. For example, he said that he was afraid that his prick was too small. (He was dressed). Then he said that no one else's was much bigger. (Undressed)

"Well, some peoples'," said the female Johnson (Dressed).

"If you don't like this one," said the male Johnson (dressing) "you can always go get another one." (dressed)

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"I don't want to," she said. (nude)

At this, Teste threw the refrigerator door shut and went and opened a window letting in a breeze so cool as to goosebump the entire surface of the skin in the room, the skin being, just at that moment, caught defenseless at a dress-undress junction.

Soon, the Johnsons had the inevitable "Let's go home. Let's don't" fight and soon they left.

It was, I thought , a delightful way to spend an evening but Monsieur thought differently:

"You've been doing the wrong thing," he said to me. "You've been trying to be human. It doesn't pay. It is better to be a root or a stalk. The point is that you can't trust the world with your understanding of it."

"But how then," I said in utter astonishment, "can you entrust the world to your understanding?"

"You can't," he said and laughed, the first time I have ever seen him laughing because, if you remember, he never laughed with Valery.

In the middle of the night I got up, careful not to wake Monsieur, and I began to write in my journal. But he woke up and spoiled my pleasure:

"Aha!" he said, "You don't believe that the world exists!"

"What do you mean?" I feigned, knowing only too well what he meant.

"Writing stands squarely in opposition to the world, it is an addition to perception, an ordering process, a way of forcing unnatural connections, it is an inaccurate description for the sake of sanity . . . You're afraid of going mad . . . You think that you're allowing visions to surface while in reality you are putting the verbal lid on your unconscious . . . You are perpetuating a system on which the mind bases its arrogance against nature . . . "

He was absolutely right. I burnt my notebook.

*

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April 19

American poetry came to lunch today. Many poets were missing but I made do with the ones who were there. The poets there were mostly from the New York School, a school which I attended in the hope of finding out the simple secrets the ignorance of which so handicaps a foreigner in America. These poets knew a great number of simple secrets which they spread around generously unlike the rest of the schools which bored me to death with their European pretentions. I had learned among others such notions as "Clear the range!" (Ted Berrigan) "If it fits in your mouth it's natural!" (Ted Berrigan) "Take it easy!" (Anne Waldman) "What's up Doc?" (Tom Veitch) "Why not Egypt?" (Dick Gallup)

For lunch I cooked a whole favorite menu of mine composed of 15 dishes:

ENTREÉ

New poetry movements. (I am an expert in these because I made up most of them. Aktup, Metabolism, the Bowel Movement and Syllogism, all have me as one of the founders. I have also furthered Actualism, Essentialism and Infantilism. American poets with their pragmatic sense of craft and their ferocious drive toward respectability, are afraid of labels. This is because labels, traditionally, have been put on them by critics. So, at some point in American poetry there began a race to elude critics. The widest range of cultural ecclecticism was brought into play in every poem in order that the poet place him or herself beyond criticism. The exception to this are the conceptually inclined who paste on their own labels and elaborate their philosophy at leisure. See Isidore Isou's Lettrisme through to Aram Saroyan's Minimalism.)

SOUP

Pure meaninglessness does not exist, only misdirected intentions. Nobody has yet written a perfectly obscure poem, sit down, Clark Coolidge. Is it because nobody has yet committed a perfectly arbitrary act? I would think that a complete student of the abstract does not exist either, because he or she would have a body, hence a cliché. In the form of a body everybody inhabits a cliché. The question, naturally, is: Is the Universe arbitrary? and the answer, depending on your prejudices, commits you to a cliché. But nothing, *nothing* can stop you from reshuffling it, regardless of point of view.

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PÂTÉ DE FOIS GRAS

Ted Berrigan & Tom Veitch.
Ted Berrigan (who has Dada and is basically innocent) reshuffles the language we speak every day in order to present himself to us disguised as us but from an unexpected angle, that of hearing our own words in his mouth on a page cut in talk patterns. Tom Veitch (who has God and is essentially anxious) reshuffles concepts like death, love and sex in order that they leave their conceptual skins and throw us into fits of self-examination. Tom uses a lofty and aristocratic place from which things are small enough to be manipulated but big enough to scare the wits out of us. Ted, on the contrary, is possessed by one instrument, his voice. Ted is a purer writer than Tom because the philosophy of a situation only interests him if it is incomplete, i.e. human. Tom reaches for harmony with higher forces and is, in this sense, a purer magician. Purity, one sees, is really the degree of dedication to one's obsession. Ted is obsessed with voice, Tom with God, and each of them does it by shifting things out of their conventional places.

GRAVY

I see reality through a grid.
Each little square in the grid is an action
preceded by DON'T.
Outside the grid is the world of DO
so if I were looking in from the outside
I would be so busy I wouldn't even
perceive the grid
hence no poems.

A MEDIUM SIZED SUCKLING PIG WITH APPLE IN HIS MOUTH

There are poets with a distaste for reality.
These poets are insane, meaning that they have no defined territory toward which to reshuffle their world, so they wander through their imaginations and bring out things that, on first sight, nobody has ever seen. These poets have to be intelligent, however, and if they are, they usually notice that what they brought back resembles some quite common thing that everybody sees every day. At this point, they form a method by bringing their intelligence to bear on their romanticism. These poets have no style. They are mechanics of celestial pornography. Michael Brownstein is one of these. I have never seen anything of his in which a subtle apology isn't made to some secret search. All his works say: *Look, I am sorry, dear God, but as I was coming through the stratosphere half of you burned up so I put a shoe in the missing place.* John Ashbery, in a way, does the same thing but, having come into his own way on the academic babble of Wallace Stevens, he keeps his terms abstract. This is a terrible disadvantage from the point of view of accessibility because abstracts tend to make one re-examine one's shakiest assumptions and, if this were done, it would take 12 years to correctly read a John Ashbery poem.

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STEAMING SPUDS

The search for meaning is an instinct, especially if the poem suggests that meaning should occur. But no poem, as said before, can help *but* suggest it, because language is a machine of control. Burroughs got into that pretty good. The language of poets like Brownstein and Ashbery is, usually, international. The Surrealists were of the same mind and ended up creating the first international poetry idiom.

FRUIT: PEACHES, MELONS AND BLACKBERRIES

It is a monument to the stupidity of American criticism that all references to the New York School have, so far, spoken of a collective voice when, in truth, it is precisely the New York School that has brought the largest number of methods, attitudes and trends into a scene dominated by unbelievable uniformity and boredom. There are at least fifteen poets in this set who embody essentially fifteen major cultural philosophies.

DRUGS: COCAINE, YOGA AND POT

The politico-literal-sexual waterfall of Anne Waldman, John Giorno, Tom Clark and Lewis MacAdams. In this case, the personalities of the poets are in constant demand and the steady intensity becomes a special therapy, models of which could be made and sold at political conventions.

NAPOLEONS, RUM BABAS, ECLAIRS AND BAKLAVA

Informational accumulation in view of a massive collapse of the senses; Peter Schjeldahl's monomaniacal recording of dreams, Scott Cohen's fascination with large statistics, Alice Notley's collection of bizarre colors & rare flowers, Kenneth Koch's lyrical efforts to eat the vocabulary, etc.

CIGARS

Aram Saroyan & Joyce Holland. Minimalism & Essentialism.

COFFEE

The wonder world of Joe Brainard. This is the LOOK WHAT I FOUND! school and is, uniquely, American.

HONEY

A school of cultural refinement organized around obscure but exciting quarrels with all kinds of Alexandrian poses, eclectic decadence and transcendental irony. (Transcendental irony is, naturally, the opposite of bourgeois or proletarian irony. It is irony with the superior term in another world); Tony Towle, Carter Ratcliff, Ron Padgett (sometimes), Kenward Elmslie, Bill Berkson.

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A FINAL JOINT

None of these exist in a pure state. See Dick Gallup.

WHIPPED CREAM

There is a lot more. Some resident critics would now be in order. Poets, as a rule, see themselves as completely defined by their works and the critical intelligence brought to bear on their contemporaries is almost always oral. America is, however, in great need of some new directions and a translation of these poetries into easy-to-follow computer programs could, conceivably, save the world at least a hundred years of sterility.

Everybody relished the food immensely and when we were all full, we began to sing songs made in the spur of the moment and write collaborations.

Later, Teste & I washed the enormous pile of dishes in silence. Throughout the evening, Teste had been terribly quiet, unimpressed with all the gaiety around him. I did not want to press him for an opinion of the evening but, shortly after, when we went to bed, he said:

"I find collaboration like youth: chatty and arrogant."

Pressed for clarification, Monsieur said the following (which I am going to use as an introduction to the collaborations of the previous evening):

"As the Nazis knew, collaboration helps the Empire. It is a sad reflection on our times that instead of fucking, people collaborate. Do you know how many drugs you consumed last night?"

"No," I said, "I don't remember."

"The hipper among your readers . . . "

"The *hipper*?!"

"The heap there, of readers, will, no doubt, be able to identify what drugs went into each one of these sad works and, god knows, there was hashish, speed, coke, opium in alcohol, alcohol in glasses, etc, going in at the rate of two drugs per poem. I saw it all."

"The Surrealists," I said, "like the late New York School . . . "

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"Ended up dead and in books."

"Collaboration was quite the rage in Alexandria too in the 6th Century . . . Alexandrin verse originated in two heads . . . "

"Which goes to prove that, aware of their homosexuality, the great Alexandrin writers convinced the better looking boys to pick up the warm pen and finish their thoughts . . . "

Teste finished with a smirk and, without apparent connection, he added savagely: "I am *not* from Rumania."

"Each one's Teste is from wherever each one is," I said, but he didn't laugh.

"I am an embodiment of the 3rd person," he said.

"The hell you are," I countered, "You're the 2nd or nothing."

We had our first quarrel.

"Big words are the mark of small minds," he said.

"Up your ass."

"Unroll your panties."

"I have a feeling that I am not terribly important and on that basis I propose to forget myself for awhile."

"Adieu."

Tonight we made up. We looked at the immense sky filled with stars and we felt at peace with each other. Teste did not need any prompting to feel at peace but I had to repeat to myself W.C. Williams' famous lines:

I have discovered that most of
the beauties of travel are due to
the strange hours we keep to see them

before I too felt a cosmic grace and boundless happiness. My heart, at 3 AM, was full and in harmony.

*

April 20

This morning I realized the difference between me and Teste. He is at least 20 years older than I am, by virtue of his

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being from Europe. I overheard him murmuring, as he was shaving himself:

"Understanding is for the old folks. The young ones should fight."

I can't say I disagree. But can you trust the old foggies?

"Being as full of ideas as you are," said Monsieur, disdainfully, "you will not have failed to notice that I never think about sex."

"I have noticed," I answered curtly, "At your age . . . I understand . . . "

"You understand nothing. How many crab and shrimp stores have we passed by?"

"None that I remember."

"See? You don't know. I like sex with shell fish."

I knew better than to believe him.

We went to the ocean.

"Isn't it beautiful?" I said.

"No," growled Teste, "It's obvious. I like my beauty elusive, a little perverse if you please . . . "

I was beginning to wish Teste would leave. Slowly, the hooded executioner rose from my archetypal pool bearing the shiny tools of his trade: insults, conspiracies and anxiety. I knew however that I could not, at this time, execute Teste without eliminating myself in the bargain. I proposed a vacation instead.

To my surprise, Monsieur agreed. He was already taking walks by himself, he would simply prolong one of these and walk for a whole day and night. He packed up very carefully the 3 items he carried and left without words.

*

April 21

A blissful day. Not a thought. I had steak & eggs for break-

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fast, visited K, fucked and slept.

*

April 22

"Money," I said, "Money, Teste."

He didn't understand.

"I can't afford to keep you any longer. I ran out of money."

Teste regarded me, squinting: "What you mean to say is, you are afraid of what I *think* about money."

"I know you *don't* think about money. You merely understand its principles. You know, for example, how it operates, what it's used for and how it can be transferred from one pile onto another. You are a brilliant economist, Monsieur, but what I'm saying is: I don't have a penny. We need cash."

"OK," said Teste, "Here is what you do.

"You go into a big department store and buy a steam iron or a power drill. You pay for these, go to your car, put the drill or the iron on the front seat and then return to the store with your bag and receipt. In there you get another steam iron or power drill, walk up to the cashier and say: 'I'm sorry. I just remembered that she already has one. I would like my money back. Unfortunately, I don't seem able to find the receipt. But you remember me: I was here a moment ago.' She'll give you money; you go back to your car and drive your iron or drill to a similar department store where, since you have the receipt, you can get some new money."

I was astonished. Monsieur Teste, Monsieur Teste, where did you pick up that kind of talk? That is unutterly like you.

"I picked that up," said Teste in answer to my thoughts, "in Monterey. I like twists. Twists are forms of relaxation."

And think of it—only yesterday I had been tired of Monsieur Teste. And today, today, he began to deliver what I had brought him to America for. Simple secrets, "twists" he calls them. Our relationship was squarely back on its original purpose: accelerating my understanding of the simple secrets.

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Just think of how many Americans I would have had to interview to give me what Monsieur Teste had released in a pinch. A whole commune at the very least. Which is not to say that Monsieur Teste is intelligent. He is not. He is an aristocrat. I must describe his face in case you missed him: like a doll torn up by traffic, his face bears the scars of a thousand fights. But over it, a sort of plastic mold has settled, fixing his features in place—a mask of serenity. Aristocracy is the mold of immobility. An aristocrat does not move without reason. I need Teste. He is the European way, the logic of my childhood. I must defend my life from prose.

"Which direction should we go?" I asked him in the morning as we were about to take a rare common walk.

A cement mixer, across the street, began its infernal whirring. Monsieur listened intently.

"It sounds like it wants to hurl us North."

Monsieur liked to leave the impression that his decisions were dictated by the advice of inanimate objects in his immediate surroundings. Perhaps they were. After all, he had *really* listened to that cement mixer.

Teste has a vast knowledge of European literature. Like a cement mixer his mind could hurl together disparate fragments of various literatures to create the continuous paste of interest on which his presence was founded. As for contemporary literature, he finds himself in a curious position. People always ask him, he told me, how is it that he loves writers that he, only a week before, castigated for cheapness and stupidity. That is, Monsieur Teste replies, because a week ago he hadn't read them. "I was castigating them for not coming to my attention. There is no reason in the world why I should love somebody I never read!"

With this kind of opinion, he generally manages to give a psychological slant to his knowledge, which is a pity, really, considering that what makes scholarship great is lack of editorial attitudes.

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We quarrelled over fiction. Fiction, in my opinion, should divest itself of psychology. Description is really psychology so, please, no description. Dialogue is generally nonsense and it smacks of music so, please, don't say anything.

What remains then? Why, the subjunctives, of course.

Teste heartily agreed but said this: "Do you like people or not?"

"Well, I do, sort of . . . of course . . . "

"There you are," he said, "you need psychology to eliminate the threat to your race."

I really don't know what to make of Monsieur. On the one hand he says that it is better to be a root or a stalk. On the other he recognises the human dimension. Then I remembered what he thinks of writing, in general, and I realised: my God, this man is real, he is tremendously real, he is over-real, he is here and oh Lord perhaps he has no plan, after all.

I was mad. But Teste had already curled up in a chair, with the refrigerator door open, staring into what to him must have amounted to the heart of Universe.

*

April 23

I woke in panic. I thought, for a moment, that Teste had packed his swift bag and left me in the middle of the night. I was happy to hear him say:

"Your genes are like the layers of an onion. None of your ancestors had enough imagination to make himself God."

"Actually," I began tentatively, "my grandmother . . . "

"Cut the crap," he said, "there is no purposefulness in you."

"You mean purpose?"

"No. I mean 'purposefulness' like stature, like attitude. I have watched you get up in the morning. Every morning is different. Sometimes you wake up feet first, sometimes you lift your head up and, at times, you feel the air with your hand like a cheap viola in search of a Nazi."

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"You mean—no consistency?"

"I mean well," he said.

"And yet," I replied, pointing to the piles of manuscripts lining the tops of our heads on shelves set high enough so the cat wouldn't piss on them, "there is consistency in those. I want to tell the world about the prejudices of my time and how my personality reacted to them."

"Ha ha ha," said Teste, "you don't even claim resistance. Or distance. You are a lost soul."

Looking like a bishop, Monsieur joined his hands and put the mitre of his tangled fingers in my face. They smelt, slightly, of garlic and asparagus.

In order to prove my humanity, my consistency and my reality I worked all afternoon on a *Dictionary of Received Ideas* to spring on Teste when he returned from the walk he had now gotten into the consistent habit of taking by himself.

I quote from the rather lengthy work:

If you look at fire long you'll pee in bed.
The underground's been forced there by mean weights.
Boys take after their mothers, girls come out of nothing.
The excess of reason makes monsters of boredom.
White flowers are funereal.
Black flowers are erotic.
The academia is taxation without imagination.
Carfax Anthrax.
Perspective is the eminently human point of view.
God is partial to ferociousness.
Birds filled with lead.
A sense of humor is a sense of authority.
Closeups don't have any sense of humor.
Truth sits in an autobiography like a bird dog in an underground hospital.
The Exterminator is after the facts.
A man's name is his cage.
A miracle is the shortest explanation.

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Intuition is the daughter of miracles.
Baby irony is transcendental.
Geriatric irony is worldly.
Worlds meet at ironic junctions: the resulting clash is a miracle.
Jews wander.
Mommy means I want. Money means I don't need her.
Heraldry is a structural horniness.
The penis is a barricade.
Poetry is mistranslation.
Being a man saves you money.
A discovery is followed by silence not applause.

I wrote hundreds of these but when Teste came home I didn't dare show them to him for fear he would open the refrigerator door and say nothing. Teste is not rude, he is just superior. Without him, I wouldn't even know there are better things in this world.

Teste is a gourmet. I won't mention all the things he brings home from his walks: fragments of old fire-escapes, snails without shells (slugs), dirty socks, meteors.

*

April 24

Today, as Teste lay silently on his bunk looking at an incipient spiderweb, I planted myself near the door and broached the subject of insults. Every day since he had arrived, I had become more and more defiant, more and more insulting. Yet Teste did not seem to notice. I had broken my rules on his back at least a hundred times. I had called him Teste without Monsieur in front to taste, as it were, the wine before the real name could swallow it. I had done him endless little bad turns. I had made him gulp America while I held his jaws open. I had been a miserable tormentor to this man whose sublime dislike of history made him into a saint. I had been

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horrible and yet, like a flower enjoying the rape of the bee, he had withstood my grossness with a lighter and lighter heart. He must like it here, I perversely thought. And if he does it will be *I* that must move out . . . I am the one carrying the dissatisfaction. Teste is spotless. He has grown more real while I have grown more insecure.

I blurted: "Teste, my dear, I think it is impossible for me to insult you."

He didn't take the bait. "You will find a way," he said.

"I'm stuffed up with thoughts like a swan with pomegranates," I confessed.

Feigning innocence, which he despised, he said: "You sure know your Latin!"

Defeat. The funniest thing happened. Teste was coming home through the ghetto when, suddenly, two burly men grabbed his thin arms, pushed him into a doorway and emptied his pockets. He had nothing on him except his mathematical instrument which lay at the bottom of the little velvet case.

"What's this?" one of the men said, holding to the light the tiny mathematical tentacles of solid brass which composed the body of this thing.

"Allow me," said Teste. He took the instrument from the man's hand and began turning the black knobs at the root of each tentacle.

"Hey," said the other man, "I hope that thing ain't . . ."

He did not finish with words but with a howl of pain. His companion began to also howl and as they howled at each other, Teste stepped neatly through the thin part in the middle of their howl loop and exited into the sunlight where a wino greeted him.

"How did you do it?" I asked when he told me the story.

"Simple," said Teste.

"Oh no you don't!" I shrieked when I saw him reach for the velvet case.

But Monsieur laughed. "I won't do it to you," he said, "it

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only works on attackers. What this thing does,'' he continued, holding the brass beastie by its thinniest brass leg, ''is measure in an instant the square root of a man's fear and the apex of the triangle made by his reason-imagination-ego. When I swing one of these little legs, the square root of fear begins destroying the apex of the triangle by fast circles . . . ''

''Excuse me, Monsieur, but you are talking mathematics. I want to know why the men were in such pain.''

''They were looking into my eyes,'' Teste said definitively.

''And?''

''They understood.''

*

April 25

I have chanced upon the ultimate insult. I will put Monsieur Teste in a novel. It had been Paul Valery's way of dealing with his Teste and I have no proof that it is an old-fashioned method.

I mapped my attack or ''my novel''. (I call it ''my novel'' in order to make absolutely certain that, by implication, everything in it is mine. This is harder than it sounds because very few novels really belong to their authors. They write them all right, but *inside* the novels things belong to no author, they belong to each other through complicated contracts of ownership called *relationships*. My novel would have to have no relationships. This, again, is difficult since not only characters but also words stand in certain relationships to each other. It was in the nature of relationship to delegate ownership to the wrong party. Studying the nature of relationship, it soon occurred to me that only *natural* relationships were at ease with their possessions. *Unnatural* relationships however were secure and therefore amenable to my eventual conquest of their territories. At this point I was called upon to define unnatural relationships. Could there possibly be unnatural relationships between characters that know each other? No. Absolutely not. Their acquaintance legitimized their relation-

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ship. The first rule of "my novel" would be then: the characters must not know each other. The only way to do this is to hide them from each other in ways too ingenious for them to discover. What was the most ingenious thing on earth? Ah, the Cathedrals, of course. They were unsurpassed in ingenuity. I would build "my novel" like a cathedral and I would place my characters at the intersection points of the naves on ellyptical orbits so that no matter how hard they tried they could not intersect each other.)

I must obtain a structural drawing of Notre Dame, was my first to last thought before I closed the parenthesis.

My last thought was this: I would place Monsieur Teste at the four corners (literary surgery) of a North inner square so that he could look up and see the whole circle of characters above but could never reach them until the circle was squared. And that, I knew, would take a while.

What an insult!

*

April 26

The structural design I was looking for was printed in an old National Geographic behind the bookcase. I was studying it at breakfast this morning when Teste, with uncharacteristic curiosity, peered at the design.

"Ha ha ha," he laughed, "I see that you've reached Point Terminus."

"What? This?"

"I will tell you a parable. A very rich man had a servant who annoyed him. The rich man could not very well kill his servant because he was a civilized rich man and he abhorred strongarm methods."

"Hmmm."

"So he decided to take his servant with him for a visit to the Labyrinth of Crete where the minotaur was imprisoned. He planned to lose his servant in the labyrinth. If the man could not find the entrance he would blame his own stupidity."

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"Right," I said, guessing the end. "The servant got out but the rich man was lost."

"Wrong," said Teste. "They were lost together and had to keep each other company until they died."

Ugh! I, at once, scrapped the idea of losing Monsieur in a novel. I recognized the parable.

THE BIG CHANGE

At this point I will dispense with dates because the subsequent events did not belong to time, *do* not belong to time. Roughly, The Big Change would, if the chroniclers insist, last between April 27 and March 6, making Monsieur Teste's American sojourn exactly 21 days long but I must say to the chroniclers' eternal confusion that not only does time have nothing to do with it but neither do I or Teste for that matter.

I prepared The Big Change with the thoroughness of a fat student preparing for her diet exams. For weeks, just under the skin of my consciousness, my chemistry prepared to flood the outline of the world with a dazzling substance. On April 28 the outline was filled, time evacuated the chamber like hydrogen escaping the balloon and The Big Change reared nervously in readiness.

Since my identification papers were in the disorder proper to a shadowy alien I borrowed a friend's ID and credit card. Under his name I rented a car which I didn't know how to drive. I got behind the wheel and ignoring my ignorance I drove to the house, I packed Monsieur's bag (he was out walking) and I settled to wait for him as an invisible crayon drew black circles under my eyes. He returned at 6:15 PM, stepping, as it were, straight out of a splendid San Francisco sunset painted by Alice C, circa 1970.

"Entrez," I said, sliding the car door open like the involuntary jerk of a wing.

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He entréed and we were on our way. I turned on the car radio and this song escaped the FM band to complement the sunset, amplify my triumph and underscore Teste's feigned bewilderment:

We're on our way
Where to I couldn't say
'Cept the open range
Readies me for the big change

We were going, I shouted to the Monsieur, to the source of all my problems, to the place where boredom had nearly killed me, we were going to Heaven or, if you prefer, we were returning to the country in the wild depths of which my tree house stood with the lingering shape of the post-mistress still darkening the window. We were going to the place where my cry for help had formed the telegram by means of which humans always telegraph their gods that they are in trouble.

I was taking Monsieur Teste to a place unlike any other: the American countryside of Northern California, that gothic slumber of prehistoric ferns slowly shaking their scales upward toward trees so tall the clouds had to tear their bellies going over, that place of mysterious murders, bodies floating down the swollen river, sudden red moons, hysterical and ancient inhabitants exchanging gasoline bombs with new but brutal settlers. We were going to the wild wild west, ad 1974, ad infinitum, ad nauseam, ad lib.

Up to this point which was so small no light went through it, I had matched Teste's knowledge of the world bead by bead. I had been born in a city, Teste had too. I had devised the coarse grains of my wit in coffee houses where Teste had his made into coffee, I had known sex in the shadow of libraries whose shadow Teste was, I had walked to the store at 4 AM for cigarettes as Teste had in the hope of being the first one to spot 5 AM as it dawned on the clock. Our experience, different as it may have been, had, until this point, sprung from a common landscape like a lion and a man from a formica sphynx. But

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now I was about to take Monsieur to the place where the crack first appeared on my soul map.

As the first signs of the country began to appear as ruined barns, stray dirigibles, hitch-hikers, cows and enormous gold onions, I accelerated and at the speed of 150 miles per hour we effectuated the entry into another world.

A screech of brakes warned me that I had stopped for a hitch-hiker. This hitch-hiker, composed of a rucksack, two white socks, two eyebrows knitted in perpetual surprise and an obscenely bright rainbow around the left eye was a female.

The female threw her gear in and swiftly followed suit.

"Where to?" I said.

"I don't care," said she, "as long as it's out of Sonoma County."

That, it was.

"American geography is bizarre," said Teste, "how can anyone go to a place the roads don't go to?"

"One can't," said I.

"You two," said the female, "sound like a bunch of grapes." I saw no connection but Monsieur did.

"We are grapes," said he.

"Don't get squashed," the female said.

"Don't worry," says I.

"We will," Teste says.

Then we laughed. I noticed how Teste's laughter did not come from his chest or his throat, it came from lower down, it came, I realized, from his penis. He laughs with his penis, it is astonishing. I stepped on the accelerator.

"I wish I was in love," said the hitchhiker. "I want to have a baby."

I wished Teste knew how to drive. I would have liked to climb in the back to make babies. I care for love. I think that at the core of the Universe a glowing lump of love sends its radiance through tremendous obstacles into our hearts.

"Do you have a baby?" Teste asked me, knowing only too well that I had no such thing.

"No."

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I didn't have a baby. I didn't know what life was about. Is that what Teste implied? He didn't have a baby, of course, so he could imply whatever he liked.

"Will you have my baby?" I said to the hitch-hiker.

"That depends."

"On whom?"

"On your stock," she said. "It's like this . . . I will have nothing but the best stock."

"It's good stock," I said. "My ancestors were terribly particular about their stock, they even issued stock certificates on their continuing 99 per cent."

"What kind of stock?" she said.

"Jewish stock, a rising stock."

"What's your stock?" she said to Monsieur who, throughout this exchange had fallen asleep.

"I have no stock," replied Monsieur, "I come from nowhere. I'm a clear soup."

"Even clear soup is a stock," the perky redhaired said.

"What kind of stock," said Teste judiciously, "when it didn't even start with water but with ink."

"Ink soup," she said. "Yeek."

"There you have it," I said, "I'm the sensible stock."

"OK," she said, "take me to your sack."

I was very happy. Now I would show Teste. I will have a baby in the totally baffling wilderness with an utter stranger. If he finds my reasons unimpeachable he will have to capitulate. And if he capitulates, I will stay in America, get myself an American citizenship and enlist in the army.

It was not to be.

We arrived thanks to tortuous roads, assiduous turns, pindrops, cliffhangers, curlicues, mud spirals, twisted valley bottoms to the little cabin which I had occupied until I had been seized by boredom. Faithfully, my dark cabin in the deep, awesome woods had kept itself for me, had wrapped itself for protection in the vast networks of spiderweb and had waited. Everything was where it had been, ready to go to where it hadn't.

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It hadn't, I am sure, been to the place where the 3 of us were soon to take it. It had never had more than one inhabitant and an occasional stranger. Its creaking floorboards had never supported the weight of 3 humans since the day it had been built. Its ceiling had never felt the warmth of 3 headtops, its walls had never been touched by 6 hands, its doorknobs had never been turned by 30 fingers, its one bed had never held three full heads of hair and its septic tank had never received an average of 19 to 27 bowel movements a week. But cabins like question marks have infinite patience. We felt at home. At least I did and Ellen, I am sure, did too. Teste had no concept of home.

"Can imaginary characters have real babies?" a peasant once asked Voltaire.

"Of course," the great man said, "it's their way of facing reality."

*

First Night (it is always night)

Monsieur Teste makes a big fire in the woodstove, sits on the floor in front of it, folds in two like a hasty note and goes to sleep.

Ellen takes off everything with the exception of a worn pair of panties and an army surplus bra which holds her abundant pendulences. Her shadow is on the wall.

"Let's see your stock gun, lover boy!"

"Jeezus," I say, pretending to be indignant.

"I am a star," she says, "you can't expect me to be reasonable or respectable."

Her shadow on the wall is pierced by the stars in the window. Her flesh on the bed is pierced by the branch sticking out of my body. Her honeycomb breathes around my branch and my flowers fall off and some green fruit too.

The cabin shakes.

"There is a possible baby," says she.

Teste opens his eyes and says:

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"Change my diapers, God!"

The fire dies out. We sleep. The wind howls.

*

Second Night (it is always night)

Teste points to the viciously full Scorpionic moon filling our little cabin window to the maximum, and says:

"Reason is an institution of the city like garbage trucks."

"Everything here is done to the maximum, Monsieur."

"Not this," says Ellen pulling furiously on my penis with her teeth, "this is at its minimum."

"That's because it was at the maximum ten minutes ago."

"The fire too is at its minimum," notes Teste.

"But the night is at its maximum."

"MAXIMUM," shouts Ellen.

"What?"

"That's the name of our baby, silly."

"No," I say, "definitely not. He will carry the impossible on his passport."

"Firstival it's a 'she', secondall it's *my* baby."

"My stock."

"No," says Teste, "it's my baby."

"Huh?" Both Ellen and I drop our mouths open from shock and surprise and the stars pour in as we circle around Teste like wounded animals considering where to bite.

"Yes," says Monsieur, "One can only own what one understands."

"Are you implying," I say, filling with bloodlust and with a savage rhythm emanating out of Ellen like a frenzied shaman-drum, "that we don't know what we are doing?"

"We know how to fuck!" shrieks Ellen, baring her fangs.

"We are human," I whisper viciously as my tongue flicks in and out of my narrow mouth.

"We know love!" Ellen and I hiss in unison as the moon, unable to control itself any longer, breaks the window and fills the room with the torn-up cosmic shroud, enveloping Teste in a

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cold light in the midst of which he stands erect like a lock of hair in a gold medallion.

"There are 3 essential mysteries," says Teste, "birth, procreation and death. The three of them together form one essential mystery. Our human function is not to understand the mystery but to increase its mysteriousness, to make it fully incomprehensible."

"Well then, well then," (chorus) "it is OK for us to not know what we are doing. Forgive us moon for we know not what we do!"

"But occasionally," Teste continues without hearing us, "there is a freaky twist and a man suddenly understands the mystery. By understanding it he transcends his duty which is not understanding it and he becomes God. To God all things belong."

"That is like saying," (chorus) "Eat this if you don't know what it is! But *I* know what it is so *I* will eat it. Never mind that you're hungry and I have just eaten."

"That's right," says Teste, "your need means nothing to me."

"I am going into labour," says Ellen.

"Now we will see, now we will see," says the chorus which, from consisting solely of Ellen and myself has, during this dialogue, swollen to cosmic proportions, thousands of voices having come through the night from all corners of the human universe to help us in our fight, to be on our side, to help us talk back, to silence Monsieur Teste.

*

Third Night

Maximum was born. It was an easy birth. I attended to Ellen with hot water, rags, a pair of scissors, half-pronounced words, comforting sounds, hisses and animal will. Teste did nothing. He looked into the fire ignoring the extraordinary physical and magical storm that had broken in the cabin. Even the trees outside rustled with the awareness of extraordinary events.

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A sudden rain fell. Animals pressed their warm bodies against the door. Maximum appeared head first so it was a while before we could tell its sex. It was a boy but something indefinite suggested a girl. A violin, its beginning shrouded in mystery, passed its bow through the exact center of my double-helix. I held the wet child in the moonlight.

"We have created a perfect hermaphrodite," Teste said.

I did not, at first believe him but as the night deepened and the exhausted mother fell asleep with Maximum on her chest clumsily looking for the nipple which fell regularly out of its mouth, it began to dawn on me that, after all, Teste might be right.

Maximum had been born with silky black hair on its head, two oval eyes surveying a tiny yet unmistakable feminine mouth and its tiny nipples suggested already the inevitable blossoming forth of a female's breasts. So strong was the impression that, at once, I was swept off my feet by a religious fervor and I thanked the forest for helping us produce our equivalent, as it were, of a unicorn. Because I knew that it is the wish of forests, of, indeed, the whole world of nature to bring from its depths constant reaffirmations of its basic unity. These reaffirmations were continually frustrated by the tendency of things to view the world in terms of their dominant characteristics. Thus the obviousness of dominant characteristics carried the ball most of the time and thus definite pronouns were born into the world. But when the dominant characteristics had their will turned off by a deep understanding of nature, the perfect came forth: the unicorn, the hermaphrodite.

It was something worth thanking God for even though Monsieur thought that praying was a waste of energy.

"You get that feeling of gratitude and what do you do with it? You throw it to the winds. Instead, you could be using it to make love."

"To make love with whom?"

"No, no . . . Not 'make love' like 'fucking' but make love like wine out of grapes. Gratitude is a kind of wine grape. You squash it into your heart instead of wasting it in prayer and, lo

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and behold, there are 30 gallons of love."

"What other kinds of grapes . . . er . . . wine . . . love are there?"

"There are infinite varieties of lovegrapes depending on the soil, the way you are built, your abilities and, finally, your innocence."

"There is par example," continued Monsieur looking into the fire which was now burning out, "the lovegrape called 'compassion'. This is a hard grape to make love from. It's also a hard grape to come by. This grape is usually found in weak old people who don't have the energy any longer to squeeze it for wine. There are professional grapesqueezers who, even though they can't make love themselves, can help you squeeze your grapes. Then there is a kind of lovegrape called 'The Wonderful' and this makes champagne. The Wonderful is easy to come by but it's hard to see it when you do. The problem is, see, that The Wonderful does not flower in an average mentality."

"This is wonderful, Monsieur Teste," I said, suddenly granting him the fathership of my hermaphrodite.

"Now take that unfinished prayer," he said, "and turn it back into your grateful heart where you have just caught The Wonderful and squeeze!"

I did what he said. I squeezed the lovegrape The Wonderful with all the might of the not inconsiderable weight of a half unspoken prayer. I don't think the pressure was nearly enough because lovegrape The Wonderful kept its juices.

"Harder, young fellow, harder!" bellowed Teste.

As if fishing for that orgasm the angel had promised Jacob I threw my weight at the heart of my half-prayer and sank into The Wonderful like an ice-breaker and this time, yes, such a miracle, this time, yes, this time around oh The Wonderful popped its multiskins and exploded in a symphony of juice leaving the arteries burning. Filled to the inside of my palate and the inside of my soles with travelling lovegrape juice I could hear my hemoglobin already beginning to ferment it.

"How long before it's wine?" I asked breathlessly.

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"Anywhere from 30 minutes to 30 years."

I sat there drowning in The Wonderful, keeping vigil over an intensely satisfied and peaceful sleeping female and a marvelous unheard of holy hermaphrodite who was presently having its first bowel movement, a greenish yellow paste like gold seen through a rusted copper sieve. Immediately I collected this stool and made a yogurt culture out of it.

I stood vigil all night (Teste slept) and, in the morning, when the first rays of the sun touched the face of the mother awakening her, I felt the beginnings of wine or love, if you prefer, stirring in the millions of bottles in my body.

Maximum awoke and stared vaguely at it.

*

Fourth Night

We found a 15 year-old child in the woods. He wore nothing but a loincloth and from his appearance it was evident that he had been raised by savage animals. The wild child avoided us at first, following us from a safe distance, but when Teste brought forth his box of Graham crackers the child leaped in front of him and pulled the box from his hands. At the cabin we washed him and from behind the grime a most beautiful face appeared. The wild child had an oval face surmounted by two brilliant eyes selected by Goya. His mouth had been picked by El Greco and his arms and legs had been ripped from Pericles' period statues and blended into the art deco flawlessness of a torso molded by Beardsley. He was, in one word, perfect. He was not beautiful in the ordinary sense of beauty sleeping or anything like that, he was beautiful in the sense of holding firm young breasts in two deliciously quivering hands after years in jail. He was so terribly sensual, the window molding began to melt and, at his slightest gesture, the pots and the plates floated gently from their shelves and landed at an angle on the softest minutes of dust. He exuded harmony like others exude wealth.

His perfect breasts (we now noticed that it was a hermaphrodite) complemented his perfect male organ with a subtle blending of textures.

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"I must, I must," I shouted at Teste and, leaping up, I embraced feverishly the bewildered child.

Merely by touching it I had an undescribable orgasm. An angelic faintness overtook me. Then the wild child spoke in accents which could have been learned at the court of King Arthur:

"My name is Maximum," (he pronounced this in Latin, accent on the 2nd syllable). "My father is a shiny vegetable who attained, at the moment of my conception, an unbreakable nature and turned into a shiny mineral. My mother is a believer in 'Ask and ye shall receive' and she has made the treachery of the interested ? into the main factor of her life. My uncle Oscar, on the other hand, gives me all the candy I want and takes me up and down in shipcruises across marvelous territories. He makes quite a bit of money in the process because I make strangers come for a few dollars. I am a prostitute-saint and in some ports they have built effigies of me and people fight for the right to touch my private parts. Statues with my private parts torn off have arrived in every museum and rich home."

Everything became clear to me now. Teste had taken my child to foreign countries and had pimped him out. I was furious. I turned at once to face Monsieur with a wrench in my hand:

"You BEAST! How DARE you?!"

He looked at me through half-open lids of marijuana which he was putting in a cloth sack. He looked at me abstractly, he looked at me quizzically. I put the wrench down and took refuge in a mean thought. Teste is not important any longer. What, with all the responsibility I now have to raise my child and the financial considerations issuing thereof, I can't possibly have any further use for Teste. He was a bum. An apple wormed through and through. A golden name on an expired passport. A question mark in a field of daisies. He never did any work! He was a pimp!

It was very late at night and we had to sleep. I slept huddled next to the wild child we found in the woods and I had a

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countless series of orgasms, all day and all night. It was as if the safety catch on my internal machinegun had been blown off by a wind from the West.

*

Fifth Night

The natives came.

They came softly, almost invisible at first. They surrounded the house quietly like guerrillas. Then some of the more courageous ones came inside. Most of them were from the Food Stamp Army and wore its uniform: bluejeans, T-shirts, long hair, beards. They were, in general, a highly inarticulate bunch with fear written on their faces. Or else an idiotic kind of courage which made one think of the distorted mailing labels that come out of a fouled linotype. Behind them, the ancient natives, armed with pitchforks and grins of such stupidity it was hard to believe one's eyes, gushed forth amidst a geyser of hip syllables.

They had come to see Maximum. I showed it to them as it lay there sound asleep on the small bed. They didn't see it.

"Are you shitting us?" said the automechanic as the grease on his face began to dissolve and form little rivulets rushing to form lines which formed the word SHITEATER on his face.

"Is he shitting us?" said the fireman to Teste who was ignoring him.

"Well isee or isnee?" shouted the automechanic, turning on Teste.

"Isee eveh!," hissed the postmistress.

"Gentlemen," said Teste, "I think you must be warned that I deal roughly with impolite punks."

"He does," I hastened to affirm, "he really does."

"Yeah," said the fireman, clicking his spurs and disengaging the steel axe from his belt, "let's see, focker!"

Moving only slightly, Teste extracted a glowing coal from the stove and threw it in the fireman's face who immediately began to roll on the floor, his eyes glowing, a 3-alarm fire beginning in his body.

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"To each his own," said Monsieur.

The automechanic, swept by the movement backwards of the fireman into moving forwards, lowered a monkey wrench in the middle of Monsieur Teste's stomach. Maximum awoke and, seeing what was happening, shouted: "UNCLE O!" jumping, at the same time, on the automechanic's back, pulling, with an expert gesture, a little lid. Gas gushed out of the man's body felling him.

The rest of the natives suddenly raised their eyes upward as if seeing an angel. Falling on their knees they began a heart-rending TE DEUM. They had seen Maximum.

"The lower organisms," said Teste as if preaching from the end of a table filled with hysterical macaws, "can see only if their sight is awakened by violence."

It was true, of course. Still, I prefer peace to pedagogy.

*

Sixth Night

Ellen returned. At midnight. The day after the birth of her child she had gone into space. Seeing how I lived in time and Teste didn't say, she had been gone for me until tonight. At midnight either I entered space or she entered time, I'm not sure, but suddenly here we were, visible to each other.

"Hi there," she said, removing her blouse to reveal an enormous tarantula walking up and down her chest chained to her neck by a delicate gold chain.

I told her how Teste had pimped out our child, how the natives had come, how I felt and what I wanted, I told her, in short, of history.

"No, no," she said, patting her pet with one hand and my poker with the other, "It was I who, disguised as Uncle Oscar, sold your child for pennies in foreign ports."

"Impossible," I exclaimed, "it would be inconsistent with your character."

"Character, my ass. Men always think that women exist to listen to history. I despise history. I have inconsistencies. I am human."

"There are no inconsistencies," Teste butted in, "inconsis-

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tencies are new characters."

"Which is what we need around here," said Ellen ominously, "some new characters."

I could not stop what happened next.

Ellen rose above Teste like a giant bird, her tarantula flapping, her arms flailing, the corners of her mouth fluttering, her breasts bobbing, her labia minor rapping vibratto crescendo on her labia major, her tongue rolling.

Monsieur withstood the assault with supreme aplomb by making himself entirely malleable like soft tar. Ellen began to mold him. She made crenellated punch craters in his chest, she twisted his nose so that the tip of it ended between his eyes, she put his ears on his nipples, she emptied his eye sockets and put the eyeballs in his scrotum sack, she split his penis in two and put each portion in one of the eyesockets so that now Teste's laughing penis looked at me with paradisiacal unconcern, she wove his legs and arms in an Inca blanket of vast dimensions, she shuffled his hips and in each of his bones she planted a different flower, she did other minor and major adjustments until the proud figure of the sad European aristocrat looked exactly like the potbellied stove in which the faint fire stirred. The two stoves, the metal and the flesh one, now stood facing each other, hungering for their specific fuel. The woodstove would, naturally, want wood and coal but the fleshstove . . . what would the fleshstove burn?

"What should we burn in it?"

"Reason, logic, politeness, irony, silence."

I prevailed on Ellen to wait a bit. I asked her to leave me alone with my "Teste" stove. (The woodstove was a "Franklin.")

I wanted to commune quietly with what remained, with the new form of my spiritual mentor, with the uninsultable Monsieur Teste. If only he had acceded to my insults it wouldn't have had to end like this. It wouldn't have ended like this if he had taken his instrument and gone back to Europe six nights ago. O why did it have to end like this? I was only a normal product of my environment. I had been in

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America long enough now to fall slave to the violence of women. Monsieur Teste should have known that I was already an American, that his arrival had been a gamble, that he might lose. Why did he lose? O why?

In the midst of my lamentations Ellen reappeared with a good part of the HARVARD CLASSICS LIBRARY under her arm.

"See if it'll burn this," she said.

She threw the books into the "Teste" stove and dropped a match on it. The light flickered for a moment then it went out. Ellen was dressed in bluejeans and a T-shirt and she had cut her hair short.

"We'll have to try something else."

"How about your brooch?" I said, pointing at her tarantula which had caught one of its feet in the gold chain and tried, in vain, to wriggle loose.

"No," she said savagely.

Her eyes surveyed the room faithfully and, suddenly, she alighted on our son & daughter, rolled in one, who was sleeping again. I understood her. I took its legs and she took its arms and we stuffed it into the "Teste". Not even the thought that we were on television would comfort me. I felt heartbroken. Ellen poured a good deal of lighter fluid on Maximum and lit the match. Again, after a brief flare, it went out.

"Gundarn," she said, "is there anything this blasted intellectual furnace will consume?"

"There is," I said.

I crossed my arms on my chest like a soft Christ and with my eyelids lowered I pointed at myself with my tongue:

"Me."

"Hmmm," said Ellen, "I don't know if I want that child to grow up without a father."

"That child," I pointed out looking at the stove, "already has no father. That stove is his father."

"Your cock, his will," she said solemnly like a priest going in reverse over an open grave.

*

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Seventh Night

This night found us in profound meditation. Ellen was having a technical meditation in which the means and ways of stuffing me into the "Teste" stove were paramount. In her mind, she had solved the American dilemma. She would feed the Emigrant to his old ways of thinking and conquer the geography. The huge seed of the female Hitler in her began to spout technicalities.

I for my part was meditating on the failure of intention. I had intended, as my readers know, to inject philogeny into geography for the purpose of owning my new position. I had failed because I had relied on the coded version of my philogeny which had been Monsieur Teste. Ellen on the other hand, as the good cook that she was, had kept the lid on her Polish ancestry and had arrived at her destiny by means of a falsely used? Ultimately, she had won because she was practical and female and knew nothing of the rules. I was innocent and male and I had spent my life thinking up the rules. Our child was the ambiguous conjunction between us, a saint up for grabs.

At this point I refrained from human affairs and gave up hope to concentrate on Ellen's motions as she slid like a suction cup toward the center of my flesh, 3 fingers above my belly button.

I put up no resistance. Why should I? I was not in my own home, I was polite and I was a coward.

She folded me like a handkerchief and tied knots on each side of my body by pulling tightly long strips of skin slit on the dotted line. Then when I looked sufficiently like a log with bumps on it (she was no artist) she stuffed me on top of my hermaphroditic child and dropped the rest of her Coleman fluid on my shifting eyeballs. I could not see the lit match which I knew adorned her fingers but I saw the tarantula stand at attention.

The flames licked me softly like the tongues of animals and I felt the grip of my "Teste" stove encompass and accept me as the proper fuel for its greedy form.

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I burnt curiously. I burnt, somewhat, conversationally. This is how I burnt:

"It is almost like going back to Europe in a slow boat full of heretics loose on a burning sea of oil." (Fuel)

"America has her reasons. She made me hungry, she made you stupid. When I am hungry I will eat anything stupid." (stove)

"When you've eaten me your walls will be coated with my neural information and you will lose your identity." (Fuel)

"But what will happen to her?" (stove)

"Oh my God, dear stove, but this is the first time I've ever heard you use the ?. It's incredible." (Fuel)

"No. What is happening is that your neural neurotic nature is already coating my perceptions. There is something in you that wants to die talking." (stove)

*

I felt ashamed.

Monsieur Teste was returning to Europe without having accomplished his mission which had been to take me back with him. I was staying behind, in the air, in the form of black smoke, dialoguing endlessly with a silent partner. I had learned the final simple secret of America:

IT'S A MELTING POT. IT WILL MELT YOU.

But I certainly had not expected it to melt me in the innards of my spiritual mentor. But it had, it undoubtedly had.

My experienced friend, Monsieur Teste, was returning to his country of origin with the smoke of my mind distributed thickly on the lining of his stomach. I had learnt nothing from him and he who knew everything had taught nothing.

Things were as they had been. I took my head between my palms and with a start I came to this realization:

I AM BORED IN HEAVEN. I REALLY AM. I LIVED TO SEE THE DAY.

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Three Poems by Charles Webb

THE GOOD IDEA

While asleep, a man gives birth to an idea of a woman. He wakes and finds it curled comfortably against him.

He takes it in his arms and kisses it. It responds perfectly. He wallows in the feel of its round breasts, smooth thighs, soft pubic patch. Its warm breath and little sighs drive him wild. He keeps thinking the words "Drunk with passion at last." He makes love to it. It's the best he's ever had.

They stay in bed all day. When the phone rings, they giggle and ignore it. They agree about everything.

In a lovely office, the man's boss throws a fit, swears to fire the man, but cools down, reconsiders. While outside a giant hand works on a picture of the sky, finally blacks it all out, throws in a moon and stars, and goes away.

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THE UNEXPECTED VALET

A milk stain in a bachelor's favorite glass decides that since no one likes it, fuck them, it will just stay.

Nothing will budge it. Not hot water. Not detergent. Not scraping with a steak knife. It stands firm—a thick, chalky scum blanketing the glass-bottom, glowering threats of foul taste and disease.

"But you know," said the bachelor to himself one day. "I begin to like this stain. It's certainly clean. I've scrubbed it every day for the last week, as carefully as if it were my son—or at least the son of part of my body, since you are what you eat, and last week I drank its dad. And since I'm alone here, with no woman to wrinkle her nose and nag about company coming and the baby getting colic, why should I harry this poor stain's miserable existence?"

"My lord!" cried the stain, which had been listening. "I swear eternal fealty. And though my usefulness is limited, I can at least keep the fiend Fastidiousness from overrunning your bachelor pad and turning you into a pussy."

"O good and loyal stain," cried the bachelor. "O unexpected valet."

And with their heads pillowed on the greasy kitchen table, the new friends wept freely, and were consoled.

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CARLOS OLD LETCH

I met a friend for lunch today and wound up at a strip club. They've gotten grosser since we used to slink into the Rivoli and think we'd put one over when they didn't check I.D. Remember how we'd gape at those g-strings and pasties, and giggle and yell and leave blue-balled and pretending not to be? Today nobody even yelled "take it off" but they did anyway—5 zombies who paraded around emitting occasional "ooh"s to convince us they were alive.

It was pitch-dark inside, except the stage—the seats losing their cardboard-and-lint stuffing, male shadows sprouting like toadstools several seats apart, my feet constantly finding sticky things whose natures I hated to guess at. An old coot beside the stage assaulted a Hammond organ while, one by one, each girl dumped her clothes in 2 songs, ground out another's-worth of "floor work" featuring the famed split beaver. 4 guys in front fainted from the smell.

I think the last girl was an ex-guy. She was tall, broad-shouldered, with narrow hips and boobs like silicone volcanos (never bounced once). She also had, under a long, curly wig, 2 wicked rows of scars—like from a whip. Jon and I'd been having fun cracking jokes and clapping at stupid times (the crowd invariably followed). But those scars kind of soured things. Brought the sordidness into unavoidable focus. These people were *serious*.

We left scrutinizing our shoes, shooting out the door like torpedoes. Screw the sexual revolution, it's still embarassing to be seen leaving a strip show. I checked myself for blue balls, was depressed to find none.

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My car was in front of a shoe-repair shop. When I got there, an old guy who looked like a shoemaker started yelling about goddamn hippies (I'm growing a beard) blocking his store. I growled "Listen sack of shit, pipe down or I'll kick your ass so hard it'll run up and down your back like a windowshade." (That phrase had been waiting its chance since used on me in junior high.) The little kid inside me blanched, expecting some awful adult retribution; but the old guy never guessed he was there, just retreated to his shop.

I flipped him the bone and drove away, barely trembling at my disrespect to elders. No question. I'm getting old.

When I used to say that 5 years ago, everybody'd laugh. Now they're as quiet as a barrel of dead monkeys. Even the fucking flies are quiet.

Arteriosclerotically,
Webb

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John McKernan

DEAR Y.

Dear Y.

What are you doing? Everyone I know is drunk. Everyone I know died. Everyone I know told me it would be all right but he had to write his mother-in-law for the go-ahead on a meal ticket. He drives it to school everyday. Everyone thinks everybody is okay. But you can't believe a shrug of one shoulder. Who knows? Everyone told me he knew. Which strange fact, I guess, explains why he volunteered himself as a hub cap for the Indy 500. Some people will do anything to get on TV. Which brings me to tooth paste. Everyone keeps telling me he writes a sonnet every night on the astroturf but that the slugs eat it in the moonlight. Everyone even gives us flashlights but it is no use. Everyone tells everybody else to write on water if he wants a durable medium. I hired a durable medium once and got to talk to everyone of Karl Marx's imitations of Attila the Hun. What are you doing? Everyone is still drunk. Will you be in Boise, Idaho this summer? I am passing through there twice on my way to the Ice Capades. I would love to beat you to death at pinball, like a drum as they say, and then drive up to Alaska for a memorial black mass in the Abandoned Union Station at Nome for the leukemiac princess and the first Tarzan. Seriously, if you will be in Storm City, Iowa over the Fourth, light a sparkler. I will see it. Your cancer leaves me speechless. I just wrote to fill up your time. I wish my fear was an anti-cancer virus. You would be well.

Best

John

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Philip Dacey

THE OPERATION

They take out all the parts marked X. You watch this in a mirror above the operating table. You never knew you had so many parts marked X. You ask the doctor what the X means. He says, "Negligible." You worry about this, how your insides are rapidly growing hollow, how a heap of yourself is growing in a white pan. A nurse says something about all this going to feed stray dogs. She means well, to comfort you, but you cannot help thinking of the old days, how you posed for pictures in magazines, modelling swimming trunks. You were rich then. The first sign of trouble came when a woman put her hand up inside you, up through the hole you did not know you had. She grimaced, as if she had discovered something damp and maggoty, something luridly and obscenely alive. When she removed her hand, you both saw how it had already begun to turn black. Now the doctor is staring down at you. His face is goggled like a pilot's. You are so light now, so unballasted, you have begun to fly.

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David Young

SEXUAL GROANS

They come in many sizes—small and faint, loud and thunderous. And it's a problem, what to do with them, they won't rise up to heaven where ears have the power of refusing to hear. You can't have them out on the streets, they're too intimate. So they get stored, wherever there's room: heating systems, file cabinets, the boxes that line the shelves of seldom-patronized shoestores. Sometimes in a bus station you see someone open the wrong luggage locker. Out come half a dozen sexual groans: heads turn, eyes widen, general embarrassment.

But this problem too is on its way to a solution. Deep in the woods there's an old mill, a ramshackle affair among great trees and cool reflections. People thought it had not been used for years, but look! The wheel, dripping, turns slowly, operating some wooden machinery inside. A single attendent dozes on the planks; occasionally he shifts a large, worn lever. This is where the secret of recycling sexual groans was discovered! The river looks so steady you could almost swear it doesn't move. But the great soaked wheel turns, slowly, majestically.

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Ira Sadoff

THE QUANTIFICATION OF DESIRE

My thesis concerns the quantification of desire: what constitutes a unit of passion, what represents a significant change in body heat? Think of all the love given out without counting: to the mistress of a man who sleeps in a bed separate from his wife, whose business interests weigh heavily upon him. Or the heretofore forgotten widow, how do we interpret a friendly hug for the husband of her friend? Or desire which is turned inward; for the adolescent whose eyes are heavy with desire the world is over-burdened with ponderous breasts, with orifices waiting to be filled by his harmless weight.

I will not discuss the multiplication of animals or the obscene gestures of plants. But who could measure the passion of children, the objects they hold in their hands, in their mouths—how can we register them in the proper categories? The aged present a different set of problems which, unfortunately, we have no time to explore.

And my dear, when I lie beside you in bed and feel the weight of your body against mine, what percentage of the thigh's movement acts in the direction of desire, what is the effect of proximity in such a case? And what of your dreams of other men, or the symbolic objects which appear in the name of unregistered sex? If we are beyond the spear and the tower, what of the car driving out of control on a dark mountain road, a conversation with a strange man in a bathtub? No, I can see now there is no end to such an investigation; why as I write these facts down my pencil quivers with a gram of desire, my desire takes the shape of this language which resists all qualification, my sober attempts at interpretation.

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Tortoise and Hare

James Corpora

He started out at a nice easy 120 strides per minute, his heart rapidly increasing its beat to accomodate the extra strain on his body, his pulse more or less normal, and his breathing deep, rhythmic, and unlabored. On his right was the canal, on his left the river, and everywhere else trees. Or at least it appeared that way. In reality, the trees were only on his left, between the path and the river.

It seemed as if he were running between the trees but this was an illusion. He ran between two ribbons of water instead: the one exiguous, shallow, and frozen over now; and the other, the river, broad, flat, and swollen with runoff. Beneath the ice of the canal there was a sense of movement, but he could neither see nor hear any water running below. There was only the ice. It reminded him of a thoughtful man deep in his thoughtfulness, words or ideas rarely breaking to the surface as

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speech. The river, on the other hand, was a garrulous old woman telling stories.

Mark: Zero. Start.

He started out at a nice easy 120 beats per minute, his heart rapidly catching up to support the extra strain on his body, his pulse more or less normal, and his breathing deep, rhythmic, and unlabored. On his right was the canal, a frozen thread of water lost in its frozeness. Further upstream, at the two-mile mark, there was a footbridge and a spillway, and just beyond that a spot with a good view of the river between the trees. In the old days, when he did four miles a day instead of ten, he would often stop here to catch his breath and look at the river. It was also here, of course, that the canal broke into an elegant babble as it spilled over the locks from one level to another, and he loved to pause and listen to it.

But then he increased his distance to six miles per day, eight, ten, and now rarely gave it a second glance as he thundered over the bridge on his way upstream toward the boathouse, an even five miles away. This is where he stopped to rest now, catch his breath, stretch his legs, then make the return trip to complete the circuit.

Mark: Two miles.

He upped his rate to 140 strides per minute, extending himself slightly but still running easily. His heart was probably double its normal 72 to the minute now, but his breathing still cadenced and unlabored. His arms and legs swung freely as he moved over the ground. As he passed the spillway something caught his eye on the left and he slowed slightly. In the middle of the river, straining a bit but making headway against the current nevertheless, a man in a small boat stroked easily through the water.

He dropped to 120 strides per minute, loafing, then 100, 80, and finally stopped all forward movement whatsoever and ran in place.

The man in the boat maintained his rate of about 40 strokes

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per minute until he was directly opposite La Palladio then shipped his oars and drifted. The two stared at one another. La Palladio waved but the man in the boat, his hands fully occupied with the oars, did nothing.

The man in the boat hunched over like a tortoise; La Palladio sprinted like a hare. When he sprinted . . . now all he did was run in place.

The man in the boat wore a hooded jacket, dark blue in color. La Palladio wore gray sweat clothes and a knitted watch cap. His sneakers were white, the two thin stripes running the length of each pant leg red.

The man in the boat was in what is known as a racing shell or scull, and La Palladio had seen him on the river now for three days in a row: always in the same place—just opposite the canal spillway—always at the same time, and always in the same one-man, single scull. At first they had had a kind of friendly rivalry, racing one another along the river and path, but then the rivalry turned to contest, the contest to struggle, and the struggle to a fight. It was no longer friendly, in other words, and La Palladio saw him not as an athlete now, but as a hunter. He, of course, was the hare. The hare always won the race going upstream, but the return trip was another question.

Or maybe he was a tortoise hunched over in his shell and glaring at him.

The scull lay dead in the water, the sculler immobile and resting, his oars shipped and his craft drifting in the current.

The runner ran, or at least he thought he ran, in reality he stood stock still now, his heart beating and the sweat beginning to collect in pockets beneath his eyes. He saw himself sprinting along a path, not the path following the canal, but the one skirting the river. He saw himself on a jetty, his right hand smoking as if on fire. And he saw himself running between trees, pursuing or being pursued.

It seemed as if he were running between trees but he ran between two ribbons of water instead: the one narrow,

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shallow, and frozen over; and the other broad, flat, and swollen with runoff. Beneath the ice of one there was a sense of movement, but he could neither see nor hear any water running below. In the middle of the other, however, the river, the sculler was grace and movement personified now as he skimmed along over the waves. Off to a quick start, he was well ahead of him and doing a neat thirty strokes to the minute.

Mark: Three miles. Strides: 140 per minute but accelerating. Heartbeat: Also probably 140 to the minute. Pulse: Racing. Breathing: Deep. Yes, very deep. But not labored as yet. Rhythmic. Body Attitude: Erect. Distance: Closing.

He added twenty beats, the sculler ten.

The sculler rowed easily, the three parts of his stroke—catch, pull through, and finish—following one another in a cadenced sequence which was almost perfect. First he would get a full blade of water on his oars, apply pressure with his legs, and then pull through. At the finish he released the water, brought the oar blade cleanly out, and shot his hands forward again in preparation for the next stroke. He took full advantage of the run of the boat. He was an excellent sculler, a champion in fact; but at a distinct disadvantage because of the current.

Mark: Three and a half miles. Strides: 160 per minute. Strokes: Now 40 per minute and accelerating. Distance: Closing rapidly.

La Palladio lengthened his stride a bit and relaxed. At 160 per minute the race was his and he knew it. "My legs better than his arms," he thought. "Arm. Winner again."

The sculler added five and then five more as he stroked through the water. He was going at a flat out 50 beats to the minute now and cruising. But then he swerved suddenly and headed for shore as if to cut him off.

"Never make it," La Palladio thought. "Too slow. Keep this pace all day if necessary."

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The man in the boat forged on, flailing the water with his oars.

"Run from a man with a knife, but never from a man with a gun," he thought. "He'll get you in the end. Wing shot."

Who had said that?

"Rico. Rico La Palladio."

No, never make it. Tortoise and hare. The tortoise loses every time. The sculler loses.

"Rico La Palladio. Rich man. Powerful man."

He sliced through the water; he streaked over the ground. And he thought about running all the way to Chain Bridge if necessary. Once he did run all the way to Chain Bridge. The next day his ankle throbbed and swelled beneath his thirty-year-old body like a sea.

Mark: Four miles. Distance: Closed. He shot ahead. The sculler shipped his oars and hunched over in his shell like a tortoise. Waiting.

La Palladio cut back to 120 strides per minute and loafed for the next half mile or so. His heartbeat was more or less normal once again, given the strain on his body; his breathing easy; and his stride loose and relaxed.

"La Palladio. Rico La Palladio. Do you know this man?"

As was his custom, he sprinted the last hundred yards to the boathouse.

"Yes sir. I do."

Going all out and jumping his rate to 200 strides per minute.

"Are you related to this man?"

"Yes sir. I am."

"Would you tell us what that relationship is please."

"I don't understand . . . ?"

"Your relationship to Rico La Palladio, what is it?"

"Father."

"You are his father?"

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"No, sir. Son."

"Fine. Fine. At last we are beginning to get somewhere. You are Mr. Palladio's son."

"*La* Palladio. Yes sir."

"Could you tell us what your father does, please?"

"Does?"

"His occupation."

"Business . . . "

"I beg your pardon?"

"He's in business."

"What kind of business?"

"Dress factory."

"I see. And what other activities does he engage in?"

"Upon advice of counsel . . . "

Mark: Five miles. The boathouse. Physical Condition: Good. His legs have been tested but are not yet tired. His pulse, heartbeat, and breathing are all slightly above normal but nothing to worry about given the distance he has just covered. His mind, however, is clouded over and full with words. His attitude jumpy and uncertain.

"Upon advice of counsel I cannot answer the question on grounds that it . . . "

He bends over double and bobs for his toes, straightens up, stretches, then does a couple of loosening exercises.

" . . . on grounds that it may be self-incriminatory. Besides, you can't ask me to testify against my father."

He begins to walk slowly up the path in preparation for the run back.

"But we've waived all that, Mr. La Palladio."

"Sir?"

"We've waived it. You are here under your own free will. Remember? There is no legal obligation for you to answer any question. May I remind you that you *are* under oath, however."

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"Yes sir. I know. But I cannot testify against—"

"What is your profession, Mr. La Palladio?"

"I am a lawyer."

"Well then you know all the legal implications, don't you?"

"Yes sir."

He sits by the side of the path, fishes beneath his jersey for a moment until he finds some cigarettes, then lights one and begins to smoke. His lungs feel clean and pure from all the deep breathing, the smoke of the cigarette harsh and corroding.

"Do you know this man?"

"I cannot answer the question."

"Do you know this man Rico La Palladio?"

"I cannot answer the question on grounds that it may be self-incriminatory."

"He is your father, is he not?"

"Self-incriminatory."

"Mr. La Palladio, what is your profession?"

"Lawyer."

"Here in this city?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you ever worked for your father?"

"I cannot answer the question."

"Have you ever worked for your father, Mr. La Palladio?"

"No sir. Never."

"Have you ever had any dealings whatsoever with any of his associates?"

"No sir."

"Do you know anything about the activities of these associates or about your father's activities and what he may or may not have been involved in with them?"

"Upon advice of counsel . . . "

"Answer the question please."

"Upon advice of counsel I cannot . . . "

"Will you answer the question please!"

"I was a boy! I read about it in the newspapers. I didn't

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know anything until I was in my twenties.''

The runner ran, or at least he thought he ran, in reality he sat by the side of the canal smoking. He saw himself sprinting along a path, not the path following the canal, but the one skirting the river. He saw himself on a jetty, his right hand smoking as if on fire. And he saw someone running between the trees, pursuing or being pursued.

Smoking. Yes. He took another drag from the cigarette and flipped it away.

Mark: Five miles to finish. Start. Backleg.

He started out at a nice easy 120 strides per minute, his heart beating normally, the blood in his veins pulsing, and his breathing rhythmic and unhurried. His legs lifted in front of him like pistons, one every half second or so, and his arms swung easily at his side. Not out to break any records on the run back, his routine was jog, walk, jog, and he paused often along the way to rest and catch his breath. Except for one burst of speed toward the end of the course, his strides per minute rarely exceeded 120 and often they were below.

When he reached the four mile mark the sculler was where he had last seen him, but in the middle of the river now and drifting. He, too, was taking it easy, and, although his oars were in the water, they were there only to keep his craft straight and his course true.

La Palladio cut back to 110 per minute, content to follow the man in the boat but not overtake him. And then he slowed to a walk.

Mark: Three miles to finish.

The sculler dipped his oars into the water and pulled through, dipped and pulled through as he slowly built his rate from zero to twenty or twenty-five strokes per minute. La

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Palladio jogged easily behind, still content to merely follow. But then something happened. With no outward sign that he had seen him, and no change in his appearance other than a slight stiffening in his back, the sculler became aware of his presence somehow and added ten. La Palladio upped his strides to 130 per minute and the race was on again. Or was it?

The man in the boat swerved toward shore; La Palladio ran straight ahead.

The man in the boat swerved toward shore, taking dead aim for a jetty about a mile downstream. He added ten and La Palladio twenty. But the man in the boat had the current with him this time so the going was much easier, adding the equivalent of ten, or maybe even fifteen, strokes to his forward speed.

"My legs against his arms," La Palladio thought again. "Arm. Beat him to the jetty."

The man reaching the jetty first would have a distinct advantage over the other. He would be a winner. The man reaching the jetty first would be in a position of power.

Mark: Two and a half miles to finish. Strides 160 per minute. Heartbeat: Very high. Pulse: Racing. Breathing: Labored. Physical Condition: Deteriorating. Exhaustion now apparent and setting in.

He dropped from the wider path along the edge of the canal to a footpath skirting the river. His stride was not as even as it had been of course, because the path was narrow and crooked, the terrain rough. He ran between trees.

"Do you know this man?"

Between trees and by the side of a river.

"This man Rico?"

He tried to sprint the last seventy-five yards or so to the jetty but it was all he could do to maintain forward speed.

"Rico La Palladio?"

He was tired . . .

"Is he any relation to you?"

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. . . tired of running. And all he wanted to do now was finish with it.

"Is he your father by any chance?"

When he came to the jetty he stumbled, caught himself, then stumbled again as he lurched toward the end of the platform. The sculler, already there and waiting for him, hunched over in his scull grinning like a tortoise, his right hand smoking.

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P. Schneidre

A MINIATURE ESSAY ON PERFECTION

This is not the place to
discuss the rain forests
of Paraguay, or their
small variations in
mid-winter coloring,
or whether Paraguay
has any rain forests.
Neither is Paraguay.

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Five Poems by James Tate

A LITTLE PAIN

I hold no greater value
than the secret
Please believe I strive
to share

You must know
Even if you don't want
to tell me
tell me.

ZEBRAS ANYTHING

I wish somebody would give me
a couple of live panda bears.
After all these years I deserve them.
Yesterday I nearly went insane

searching for a toucan:
"No toucans!" everywhere I went.
One son-of-a-bitch even went so far
as to say: "Toucans are filthy,

disgusting birds, terrible pets;
and on the endangered list besides."
And I said, then I'll take the last one,
I'll be responsible; my pets

don't have to bow and scrape to me.
We are equals, this I believe,
so give me the pandas.

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PROTECT US

My bird is the cardinal,
one will sometimes come to me

or vanishing bluebird,
even the furtherest

& their god protects me
so I will get my contact

hours with god,
come back to me

jonquils, violets, pansies
I am gagging to relive

those animal moments
we first thought

the opposite of.

IF YOU SEE K . . .

The light that is shining
over there is a traffic sign.
I returned the money I borrowed.
I am getting on very well.
I get up at 7 o'clock.
The sun rises at seven o'clock.
What's the matter.
The clock has struck 10
He struck me in the face.
He has passed his examination,
which I am glad to hear.
He intends to be a doctor,
which his father was too.

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I am very tired. So am I.
Do you like apples? Yes.
So do I.
Is mama home? Yes,
I think so.
Shall we go the theater?
Yes, let's!
Do you speak English?
No, unfortunately I don't.
Give my regards to Karin. I will.
What did he say? I don't know.

EIGHT YEAR OLD POETS

Come on, let's conjure up
something really horrible:
What would you most hate
to be doing right now?
I would most hate to be in
an orgy. An orgy? Hmmmm.
That's interesting. Why
an orgy? Because you get all
yukky! Alright, my turn,
what would *you* most hate
to be doing right now?
I would hate to be dead.
Dead, hmmm, that's interesting.
Why would you hate to be dead?
Not *yukky* enough. Well, now,
let's see, we should be able
to come up with a compromise,
something between an orgy and
dead. Let's jerk off! *Yuk!*

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Two Poems by William Matthews

THE PARTY

I don't care if nobody
under forty can hang a door
properly. I'm six and I'm bored.
In the kitchen Lavada
is plucking a turkey
who looks crumpled
and turned inside out.
He's full of holes.
I throw my skinny arms in the air
as far as my bones will let them go
and giggle. It's ten years to Lavada's heart
attack and sixty to mine.
Black overweight Lavada tucks
a feather in her hair
and we dance, her triceps
wobbling like charred wattles. We laugh
until our jawbones sting
as if we'd drunk mossy
cold, rust-flecked water
from the bottom of the well.

A WALK

February on the narrow beach, 3:00
a.m. I set out south. Cape Cod Light
on its crumbling cliff above me turns
its wand of light so steadily
it might be tolling a half-life,
it might be the second-hand
of a schoolroom clock,
a kind of blind radar.

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These bluffs deposited by glaciers
are giving themselves away
to the beaches down the line, three
feet of coastline a year. I follow
them south at my own slow pace.
Ahead my grandfather died
in a boat and my father
found him and here I come.

If I cleave to the base of the berm
the offshore wind swirls grit
just over my head and the backwash
rakes it away. If I keep going
south toward my grandfather's house
in Chatham, and beyond,
the longshore current grinds the sand
finer the farther I go. It spreads

it wider and the beaches sift
inland as far as they can go
before beachgrass laces them down
for now. It gets to be spring,
I keep walking, it gets to be
summer. Families loll,
Now the waves are small; they keep
their swash marks close to home.

A little inland from the spurge
and sea-rockets my tan sons kick
a soccer ball north, against
grains that may once have been
compacted to sandstone, then
broken back to grains, bumbling
and driven and free again,
shrinking along the broadening edge.

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James Bertolino

AROUND THE BLUE SPRUCE

There will never again
be this driveway
of fresh snow, one pair
of tire tracks down the slope
away from the house, cold
gaining on the burnt-over logs
in the fireplace, the bedroom fire
gone out. But the blaze

of a woodpecker's red
head against the white vine trellis
outside the window, outside
her kitchen, will forever bring
the chill, the stiffening
to neck and shoulders as you
come around the blue spruce
into the backyard of that morning.

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Douglas Heubler

A Portfolio

Douglas Huebler hopes eventually to be so enlightened that he will no longer feel it necessary to make art. Since 1968, when he abandoned minimal sculpture for Conceptual Art, and created a catalogue that was its own exhibition, he has produced a body of work that would seem to indicate he is heading in just such a direction.

Like other Conceptual artists, Huebler has no wish to add more objects to the world and holds that art has exhausted its retinal, decorative function. Conceptual Art also eliminates the role of the critic—information pertaining to a work appears *on* the work.

Huebler makes the further renunciation of the pose of Artist-as-Hero where, as he puts it, "The artist tells the viewer, 'Nature meant something but it didn't quite express it—let *me* show you what it meant.'" The arbitrary, purposely banal constructs of Huebler are, by comparison, "not selected for special qualities in themselves but depict what the world may look like if you point to it at a particular instant; it is the pointing to the world and making special moments for the self that are important."

Huebler is not dabbling in mere perceptual games. He is deeply concerned about a "resynthesis of vision" that might enable man to make order out of the barrage of visual and written information that confronts him. The "mind jumps" occasioned by Huebler's pieces are intimations of what such a synthesis might be.

—F.B.H.

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The line represented above is extending towards infinity at a speed that is visually imperceptible.

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This surface exists, at this instant, within an environment where an act of social intercourse, very similar to an indeterminate number of others since forgotten, will occur once again.

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LOCATION PIECE #11
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

On July 1, 1969 a point was inscribed with a ball point onto a surface (street sign) at the northeast corner of Figueroa Street and Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles, California.
As it revolved around the earth, located at that geographic latitude, 20,643 miles each day the point traveled a total of 1,899,156 miles during the 92 days that it was designed to function as an exhibition piece.*
A map** and a photograph of the site where the point was located joins with this statement to constitute the form of this piece.

July, 1969

**The exhibition was entitled JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 1969, organized by Seth Siegelaub and existed in the form of a publication of a catalogue which included similar works located throughout the world by Andre, Barry, Buren, Dibbets, Kosuth, Lewitt, Long, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., Smithson and Weiner.*

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VARIABLE PIECE #111
LONDON

During a ten minute period of time a number of mannequins were photographed through the windows of clothing stores on Oxford Street. The artist allowed no more than ten seconds to pass before making a photograph of a passerby whom, he felt, more than any other person seen during that time, most closely resembled the mannequin, thereby juxtaposing one mode of reality with another.

Ten photographs join with this statement to constitute the form of this piece.

March, 1974

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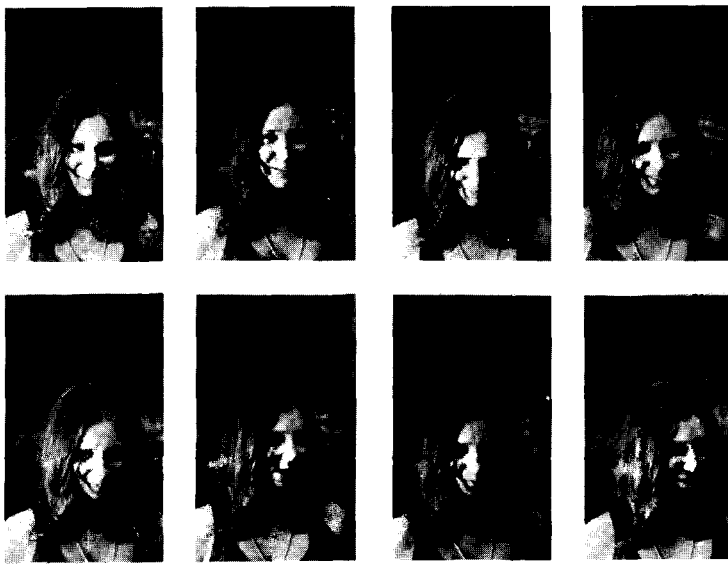

VARIABLE PIECE #116
BOSTON

A young woman sitting for a series of photographic portraits was instructed to "keep a straight face" and, at the same time, she was warned that the artist, standing behind her, might do something of an erotically evocative nature at some point during the sitting; a mirror was placed in such a way that she could keep an eye on the artist throughout the sitting.

24 photographs join with this statement to constitute the form of this piece.

May, 1973

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VARIABLE PIECE #70 (IN PROCESS)
GLOBAL

Throughout the remainder of the artist's lifetime he will photographically document, to the extent of his capacity, the existence of everyone alive in order to produce the most authentic and inclusive representation of the human species that may be assembled in that manner.

Editions of this work will be periodically issued in a variety of topical modes: '100,000 people', '1,000,000 people', '10,000,000 people', 'people personally known by the artist', 'look-alikes', 'over-laps', etc.

November, 1971

In March, 1972 a number of photographs were made in Paris, France to document various aspects of "everyone alive"; from those one was selected to represent:

AT LEAST ONE PERSON WHO HAD ACCEPTED THE INEVITABILITY OF HIS, OR HER DESTINY

One photograph and a contact proof print* join with this statement to constitute the form of this work: 32/ Variable Piece #70: 1971.

March, 1972

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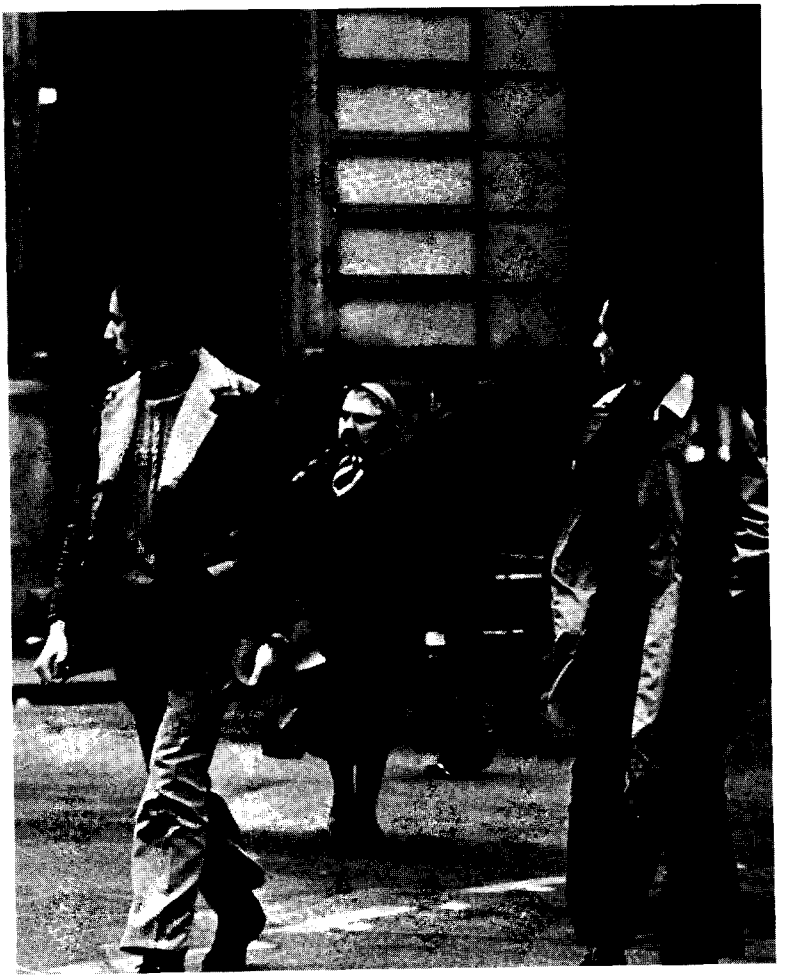

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(3)

(2.)

FIND SOCIAL G/A CIRCLE WHICH SPIRALS UPWARDS

Although These are found in the most likely places, Beware of being disillusioned. Especially when you're not looking. And Areas well known for social upward velocities can get you entangled with the most god awful non entities. Searching for the big timers can drench you with heartrending disappointment. It is better to go of old celebrity If rushing to a place of recent celebrity. Practice not letting your jaw drop when someone who is no account. But seize the opportunity to get in a lot of practice in is helpful if not essential when you happen upon some social big timers amusing himself by pretending a much lower social status and relishing the opportunity of being away from corporation household servants and the stuffy/board room where he presides as chairmen. Often Footwear is dead giveaway with these chaps who go on wearing their usual socks but who left their signet rings home. For the purposes of this tome sockwear and its telltale signs of top quality will be omitted. Ladies hardly ever do this, preferring as they do to hit the top restaurants and watering places where splendidly engemed and looking their best. Top people like to get in on simple beneficial neighborhood activities, the only trouble here is you may not be in their neighborhood. And if the subject in question has isolated a lot of your big timers on a huge estates makes the task of befriending them more difficult. And trespass may be the only method in confronting them. Top people are also fond of inhabiting enmormus apartments out of where they are hardly ever seen. The presumption here being is that you are absolutely desperate to get a foot in. This may force you to become the local grocery delivery boy.

[encountering]

[You'll trip over him]

[there in a clean but partly stained tee shirt, a beer]

[drinking]

[from]

[their gowns as well as leisure garments to be from the reigning couturier]

[haute]

[But don't overlook very own neighborhood]

[They can knock hell out of the opposition.]

[deliberate]

[hopefully, your presence presents]

[in order]

[to hit]

[their big]

Version three of a total of six written of the section entitled "Finding a Social Circle Which Spirals Upwards." from The Unexpurgated Code, *Donleavy's newest book. Each successive version gets revised, retyped and scotch-taped under the preceding version.*

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The Art of Fiction LIII
J.P. Donleavy

Copyright Camera Press

This interview took place in March 1975 in New York City in a large apartment overlooking the East River. Mr. Donleavy was in the United States to deliver the manuscript of his latest book, The Unexpurgated Code, *to his publisher, Seymour Lawrence, in Boston.*

We watched from the window as he strode purposefully down the center of 72nd Street to the fence overlooking the River and stood there for some time before he rang the bell. He told us later that he often used to come to that place on his meanderings about the city and that it figures in his second novel, A Singular Man.

Donleavy is a slight man with a long nose and sad green eyes. He sat near the window as we talked and the light shone through his thin gray beard making him seem somehow fragile—a quality he does not otherwise exude. He feels that of all his characters he most resembles George Smith, of A Singular Man. *Though born in Brooklyn and raised in the Bronx, he speaks with a British accent and uses British slang. During*

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both sessions he drank orange juice continually and ate only a small portion of food. He keeps trim by daily exercise—swimming and workouts at The New York Athletic Club when he is in New York or on his own farming estate in Ireland where he has lived since 1969.

Mr. Donleavy's first novel, The Ginger Man, *was published in June 1955. His subsequent novels have been* A Singular Man (*1963*), The Saddest Summer of Samuel S (*1966*), The Beastly Beatitudes of Balthazar B (*1968*), The Onion Eaters (*1971*), *and* A Fairy Tale of New York (*1973*). *His collection of short stories,* Meet My Maker the Mad Molecule *was published in 1964. His plays, adapted from his novels, are* The Ginger Man, Fairy Tales of New York, A Singular Man, *and* The Saddest Summer of Samuel S. *They have all been produced in London and New York.* The Unexpurgated Code: A Complete Manual of Survival and Manners, *will be published this summer.*

INTERVIEWER

Did you always know you would be a writer?

DONLEAVY

I wrote poetry at an early age but I didn't get that driving desire to be a writer until I was at Trinity College in Dublin.

INTERVIEWER

How did that happen? Weren't you a successful painter at that point?

DONLEAVY

I had had three exhibitions of my paintings in Dublin and having more or less exhausted the Irish art world, I travelled to London with some pictures and went to a gallery. One or two of the gallery's owners were very impressed with the work, but said I wasn't famous, and therefore, it didn't matter that my pictures were striking and original. Not being famous, I wasn't entitled to have anyone recognize them or me.

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I realized that the only way you could ever tackle the world was to write something that no one could hold off, a book that would go everywhere, into everyone's hands. And I decided then to write a novel which would shake the world. I shook my fist and said I would do it. "That's what I'm going to do, and no one's going to stop me." I did that again and again and again. Still do it.

INTERVIEWER

So you started writing *The Ginger Man* while you were at Trinity?

DONLEAVY

I had just left. I'd moved to the cottage I had in Kilcoole, County Wicklow. I had built a sun-porch on to it and I remember forcing myself day after day to sit at this little makeshift table on the porch. It took me seven days to get the first page and a half. I wouldn't give up; I kept at it and at it. After about 10 days, I finally managed to write about two or three pages. Then I fought and smashed and pressed on. Driving myself for several hours a day. After I'd written about 30 or 40 pages, it suddenly began to ease up a lot. And then the book actually began to take on a slight personality of its own which helped me a bit. I kept on going until I had about 140 pages.

INTERVIEWER

Did you finish the book at your cottage?

DONLEAVY

No. I wrote some on the Isle of Man and then came to America and wrote it for a year in the United States. Being out of Ireland provided a very helpful distance. My mother lives up in the Bronx and I wrote a lot of it there. I also wrote a lot of it in the West End of Boston—a little place called Poplar Street, which they've subsequently pulled down. It was a slum, between the back of Beacon Hill and the Charles, just to the side of the Mass. General Hospital. It's totally gone. In those

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days it was a fantastic ghetto where you had the whore coming home at night, and the baker across the street. I lived there in those days for eleven dollars a week, and didn't really want for much at all. My biggest luxury was a nickel for *The New York Times*. I would buy a copy and walk to the Public Gardens and read for an hour.

INTERVIEWER

How did you motivate yourself?

DONLEAVY

That was easy. It was simply money and fame. I was aware as anyone is, that in this world you can just be swept away. I'm aware of this just as much now. New York is a great place to be reminded of it. You arrive here, and Good Lord, you find out in ten seconds that nothing whatever matters, especially your own small life. So I knew I had to write a book that would be the best work in the world. It was that simple.

INTERVIEWER

What is it that makes one have that confidence? Is it just exuberance?

DONLEAVY

It could be gross stupidity.

INTERVIEWER

How did it manifest itself? Did you tell your mother?

DONLEAVY

Yes. I used to declare it openly to everybody when I was totally unpublished. The first thing anyone asks you in America is: What have you published? I'd published nothing (*laughs*) but I used to declare quite openly who I was, what I was. I had incredible nerve. What happens, I think, with a heavy, feverish desire is that the imagination will supply for that desire an impetus so that it can be carried out. Your

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imagination *drives* you with this burning fever. You're looking for some one person out there somewhere who will one day hear your voice and suddenly write back. After you're a published and accepted author, you don't have this as an energy anymore.

INTERVIEWER

Did the success of *The Ginger Man* inhibit your later output?

DONLEAVY

No. I was never affected because *The Ginger Man* wasn't a success. It amounted to nothing whatever! It took about eight years from its publication in 1955 to 1962 or '3 before it ever began to make its way, to get any kind of wide recognition.

INTERVIEWER

How did you get it published, this book that was going to make you famous?

DONLEAVY

When I was still working on the manuscript in 1952, I came across John Hall Wheelock's name. He was an editor at Scribners, and I knew a man of this same or similar name who had taught me English at the Naval Academy Preparatory School in Maryland and who had admired my writing then and was also in publishing. I wrote a letter to Wheelock to this effect. He wasn't in fact the same man, but he wrote me back and said, just as an editor obviously would, "If you've got a book, we'd love to see it." So I took the manuscript to Scribners and after a few weeks Wheelock called me in. He said "We've all read the manuscript here. Three of our editors think it is one of the best manuscripts ever brought to this publishing house. The fourth thinks it's the best manuscript she's ever come across. But I don't think we can publish it." This was because they had published *From Here To Eternity*, and it had brought them so much trouble and difficulty with its scatology that

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they were not eager to go through it again. And apparently the young Mr. Scribner who'd taken over the firm was less liberal than the old man. So the editors were less likely to stick their necks out to say, "You must publish this book." Well, when I got that reaction from Scribners—and this was in the McCarthy era, I was aware that it was the end of the road. I realized that if I couldn't get it published with that kind of terrific reception, then it couldn't get published. Wheelock gave me the name of an agent who didn't believe that Wheelock had even *seen* me, and when he read a sample of the book thought it was most uninteresting and "very unlikely anyone would publish it." Random House also turned it down. Wheelock did say that I should come back if I could remove some of the objectionable parts. I did bring it back to Scribners later but I hadn't removed a thing, and Wheelock sympathetically, I think, realized that obviously I wasn't going to.

INTERVIEWER

Why wouldn't you?

DONLEAVY

I had a sense that the book held itself together on the basis of these scatalogical parts. That its life was in these parts. And I was quite aware that cutting them would be severely damaging to it. So, to continue, that summer when I was in Boston, Little, Brown saw it. The editor called me around there on a hot, sweaty afternoon. He sat me a good distance away from his desk, and the manuscript was in a shadowy corner of the room. He leaned back in his chair very nervously and pointed at the manuscript, with his hand trembling, and said, "There's obscene libel in that book!" So that was the end of Little, Brown.

INTERVIEWER

Did you go back to Ireland then?

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DONLEAVY

Things were terrible for me. I spent a great deal of time contemplating in Woodlawn Cemetery. It is the most peaceful place in America and figures in most of my books about this country. It was also the only place I'd meet Gainor Crist, an American at Trinity also returned to the U.S. in whose wake always followed gargantuan horrors. When I left the United States I literally couldn't speak for about 10 weeks. I wrote things down on pieces of paper. I was almost dead. I could barely get on the back of a ship to get out. But things got better. I had a friend in Ireland who after reading the manuscript suggested that he would support me—he had made a lot of money writing. And there was Scribners' good opinion, and then Brendan Behan suggested I send the book to Olympia Press, which I did, and after some delay and correspondence, they agreed to publish.

INTERVIEWER

You had met Behan during your Trinity days?

DONLEAVY

He was one of the first people I met when I went to Ireland in 1946. He had just been released from prison then. He was in the IRA and was surrounded by his cronies. I met him in Davey Burns. As the afternoon's joke, the two of us were introduced to each other as writers. The Irish really cut you to ribbons. New York and London are on a different level entirely. Once you've survived Dublin there's not much they can do to you anywhere else to cut through your hide.

INTERVIEWER

Had Behan written anything at that point?

DONLEAVY

Not that anybody knew of. Nor had I. But everyone knew that we were interested in writing. So it was a great joke: Ha-ha, we'll introduce these two guys as writers. Which they

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did. And Behan and I were outside the pub squaring off to have a fight about five minutes later.

INTERVIEWER

Over what?

DONLEAVY

Over various insults that Behan passed to me, and I may have passed back to him. I would fight anybody. But, sensibly, as soon as we stepped outside, Behan said "We're not going to fight," and we didn't.

Actually, Behan had been the first person to read the manuscript of *The Ginger Man*. He broke into my cottage when I was away. When I got back I found all my pots and pans and blankets and so on in disarray . . . and all my shoes gone! There was a small studio where I painted. I went out there looking around and found some scattered sheets of paper and I picked them up and started to read. It said, "Borstal, and so-and-so did this when the screws came." I said, "Christ! This is Behan. Behan's been here!" It was the manuscript of *Borstal Boy*! Then I picked up my own manuscript of *The Ginger Man*, which was lying next to it, and I saw all these funny little marks: "Leave this in" "Take this out", and on about page 80 it had BRENDAN BEHAN written across the top of the page. So Behan was the first one to read *The Ginger Man*, and, as a consequence, had sat down to do editorial work on it. This was in about 1949 or '50.

INTERVIEWER

Did you ever take any of his suggestions?

DONLEAVY

Yes, I think one or two. But I thought it was extremely pretentious of Behan to sit down and start to do editorial work on my book. But since he thought I was a good writer, and the book marvelous, I was also pleased.

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INTERVIEWER

You have described it as a great shock to you when you first encountered him. Why?

DONLEAVY

Behan always wore his shirt open to the navel; he never had shoelaces and the tongues of his shoes would always hang out. You could see his bare ankles and the heels of his shoes were always so worn away that his ankles leaned over and he waddled around. Every year or so he'd buy himself a new suit, and as soon as he walked into the pub and someone said, "Behan, you've got a new suit!" He'd said, "Oh, you think it's new," and he'd immediately get off the bar stool, walk outside, and roll up and down in the gutter, then he'd come back in. If someone said, "Well, Behan, jeez, you've washed your hair!" he'd take his pint of guinness and pour it over his head.

INTERVIEWER

Was he good company for all of that?

DONLEAVY

He was *tremendous* company on his own. And a very, very interesting and profound man. He wasn't "a good friend." I've always described him as a kind of close enemy. But when there were a lot of people present, then he was another man. He was a great raconteur and entertained everyone. Although he was shrewd about fame, most people assume that recognition changed Behan, that he became a great bubbling over, a very talkative, almost loudmouthed crazy man because of success. But he was always like that. He would walk into a village and start to sing. He was just like a Pied Piper. He would carry on conversations everywhere and with everybody as he walked through a street. And he had admirers of his writing in his early days who gave him money to support himself. Sometime after my return from America in such terrible condition I saw him again and we went out on a great drunk in Fleet Street and ended up in another fight.

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INTERVIEWER

A real one?

DONLEAVY

Yes. He came around the next morning to ask if he could borrow my typewriter but the night before I hit him with a right hand on the nose, and he went down. I don't think I hit him with any lefts. I used to throw a funny punch—I suppose now it's a Muhammed Ali punch but he wasn't around then. In those days that is the punch I used, stepping forward as if I were throwing a stone. It works like a slingshot. (*He stands up and demonstrates, his hand moving so quickly through the air that it makes a whirring sound.*) Sugar Ray Robinson punches that way. The punch snaps like a whip when it hits. I distinctly remember hitting Behan right flush on the nose. But Behan couldn't fist fight to save his life! What Behan used to do was break a bottle and stab you in the face with it. No hesitation. That's the first thing Behan did as soon as trouble started—he broke a pint glass and held it. He did this once to himself after insulting a friend in some grievous manner. Behan was so thoroughly ashamed that he stabbed *himself* in the face with a broken glass to make amends.

INTERVIEWER

Is this characteristic of the Irish?

DONLEAVY

The fighting is ever present. They're still battling in the pubs as soon as they get drunk . . . . It was in the course of that crazy evening on Fleet Street that Behan said, "Mike, why don't you send your manuscript to these guys in Paris?" and he wrote instructions in my notebook as to how to get in touch with *The Olympia Press*.

INTERVIEWER

Can you tell us the history of all that.

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DONLEAVY

Behan said they were a nice bunch of Americans in Paris. So I sent off my book. I was totally unfamiliar with the fact that Maurice Girodias *ran* Olympia Press, and I had no idea that Olympia Press was a dirty book company and because it was involved with Editions Merlin I thought it had a serious literary reputation. In correspondence, but not until some months had passed, Girodias did say that the Olympia Press had a rather scandalous reputation but he did not disclose that my book was coming out in The Traveler's Companion series, a completely pornographic series. Nor did I know that the French government was pursuing Girodias, and that therefore he put *The Ginger Man* on this list so that he could say: "Well, this is a very serious literary work you are prosecuting. An extract from it has been published in *The Manchester Guardian*, etc." I've read somewhere he admitted this. After litigation started, and The Olympia Press was claiming rights in *The Ginger Man*, he began putting *every* author into the series.

My position was simply this: that I'd written a book called *The Ginger Man*; my name is J.P. Donleavy, the author, and that's what was being published—*The Ginger Man* by J.P. Donleavy. This was not damaging to me. But when the book came out in The Traveler's Companion series I realized I had to save the reputation of the book and my name. I went over to Paris to see Girodias. I told him there was a publisher in England who'd like to publish the book and that I would make an arrangement whereby I would have all the revenue from the English edition, and that I would give him a percentage of an American edition. He agreed to this verbally. I got nothing in writing.

So I went back to England and as the book was coming out he tried to get an injunction to stop it. He seemed to think he had rights conveyed to him in terms of contract, or letters, but it was arguable as to what rights had been assigned, so it was a contest; nothing was cut and dried.

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INTERVIEWER

Did the years of litigation influence your writing?

DONLEAVY

It has influenced me more than almost anything else in my habits as an author. If you get a letter from a lawyer in the morning, it can ruin you for three days, so I had to devise a method during the long years litigation so that I would never see mail—this was in London before I began *A Singular Man*. My mail was always delivered to an address which was known as my residence, but I never lived there. Mail was collected every three days at a strategic time of the day—4:15 in the afternoon so I'd be able to calm down before I went to sleep that night and be able to write again the next morning. It worked extremely well. No one knew where I lived at all. I received no phone calls there, nothing. No one ever went there. I also had another address where I was able to live a semi-private life, where people did occasionally visit.

INTERVIEWER

Was it all the legatory mail that inspired the letters in *A Singular Man*?

DONLEAVY

Yes. I figured out what was the basic legal letter written by all lawyers, no matter what the case. It is simply: "Dear Sir: Only for the moment am I saying nothing." That is the empirical letter of intimidation.

INTERVIEWER

The English edition moved when it came out?

DONLEAVY

It got splendid reviews and sold quite successfully—nothing outrageous—but well. It became much more successful when Corgi brought out the unexpurgated edition in paperback in 1963.

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INTERVIEWER

What parts were removed from the original hardbound edition?

DONLEAVY

Chapter 10 in its entirety, which is the chapter where Dangerfield inadvertently exposes himself on the tram. The other small cuts here and there were superficial. The publisher was assuming all risks of prosecution, and would only go ahead with publication if I allowed these cuts. I felt I had to do it to establish my name, and to get the book reviewed and recognized. It was an act of pure practicality. If someone wanted to read the unexpurgated edition, they could buy it in Paris. I had published it as I had written it, so it wasn't wrong, then, to publish it to establish my reputation.

In the beginning the publisher wanted to take out a lot more than he did, but as he went through the book he found less and less could be taken out and leave the book as a whole. But I realized as an author that I simply didn't exist. The book didn't either. I was desperate to get myself recognized as an author. It was essential, otherwise, I would be dead. Quite literally.

INTERVIEWER

You went through another ordeal with Atlantic-Little, Brown in the case of *A Singular Man*. They didn't want to publish the book after they contracted it? What did they object to?

DONLEAVY

The risk of possible prosecution for obscenity. But only one thing occurs to me. In *A Singular Man*, where George Smith makes his Last Will and Testicle. I knew that the latter term would invite a great deal of irritation in their part of the world because it was pointing fun at one of the ritual dignities that a man accumulates in his life to keep his social position.

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INTERVIEWER

What did you do?

DONLEAVY

I was extremely angered. I can remember jumping up out of bed stark naked at three a.m. in the morning and pounding my fist and saying "I've just had enough of these bastards!" And I sat down and wrote this cable. I was already pretty hardened in litigation at the time, and if I said I was going to sue someone I was going to sue them! And so I sent this cable, and they rushed New York lawyers up to Boston to read the book. What intrigued or concerned them most, I heard later, was the amount in the damages that I would seek in sueing was something like $365,000.65. It was the figure of $65,000 and sixty-five cents over and above the three hundred thousand that got their lawyers all excited: How does he get this figure!? What's he driving at? They perhaps thought that I had some kind of weird legal point that I had read in the statutes somewhere entitling me to this extra sum.

Seymour Lawrence, who then disagreed with his colleagues and who is now still my publisher, was then director of the Atlantic Monthly Press and had written me a letter longhand to Europe, which he didn't have a carbon of, and they all threw their hands up and said "Good Lord, Seymour, you've written that man a letter! He's got that damn letter and we don't know what's in it." I'm not sure but this may have been the reason they went ahead with *A Singular Man*. But it was a very unenthusiastic publication. Despite them, the book did modestly well, and as happened with all my books, it continued to sell. In fact, over the last ten years, it has become one of the biggest selling books I have in Penguin's in Europe. But it took many years for that to happen. None of the books has ever been a quick success. Yet, when their sales are added up over the years, they all rank as best sellers.

INTERVIEWER

Do you still have the pleasure you had writing *The Ginger*

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Man knowing it would be the best in the world?

DONLEAVY

No. I don't think you ever have that again. When an author's recognized, all that leaves him, because that's what he's needed to force himself to go through the terrible agony of being unknown and being able to face the world and the fact that it's a giant, vast place where nearly every man is saying: Dear God, hear my tiny voice. Everyone wants to be heard. In America, it's a pretty rare thing that anyone will listen to you. Well, my normal business is *to* listen to people. So I'm a favorite for anyone on a bus. They go out of their minds when they come across me; I sit there actually listening to what they've got to say. It's a great premium in America for anyone to be able to get up and talk, because time is so precious to everyone here desperate to avail of the rumored opportunity and no one wants to waste a second.

INTERVIEWER

You think the primary goal for all writers is this need to be heard?

DONLEAVY

No. I don't say that in terms of being a writer. I say that in terms of being a human being. I think that a garbage collector is as sensitive as any author.

INTERVIEWER

Do you believe that?

DONLEAVY

Yes, I do. Novelists are at best high-brow reporters who do their own copy editing. I would never think I was superior to a journalist. Never dream of such an outrageous thing! I'm astonished, picking up the daily New York newspapers to find the splendor of the writing and the marvelous stories. It's amazing. Being a good novelist really comes down to being a

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good newspaper reporter; you're trying to get what you've written on your page into a reader's mind as quickly as possible, and to keep them seeing it. That is why I use the short, truncated telegraphic sentences. They are the most efficient use of language, and I think the brain puts words together the way I do.

INTERVIEWER

What is the difference then between a reporter and a novelist? Is it hyperbole?

DONLEAVY

I suppose a novelist, being unrestricted in his subject matter has a greater number of places he can go wrong; step off the route. The disciplines involved in being a novelist are perhaps greater *because* you can do what you like. You're not confined to reporting three-alarm fires and quoting people. What you are writing can run away. So you have to impose severe disciplines on yourself. But, perhaps I know less about it than I imagine.

INTERVIEWER

You would have no difficulty going out and describing a three-alarm fire for a paper?

DONLEAVY

I often wonder if I could really do a good job of it. I have thought of that frequently, of actually being a reporter, writing a story of that sort. I do carry a notebook, and write things I notice down in it. For instance (*pulling it out*), "A low murmur of deals and figures." "At the Waldorf, a little brass dust tray which swings upright as the man carries it around." "A black convention and a lot of black people going through the Waldorf." When I am writing a novel, at a certain stage when I know things are going at a good pace, I can sometimes open up a notebook at random and take out a sentence like one of these and put it into any part that I'm writing. Sometimes

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there are logistical problems. But not often. Usually, however, these notes are just building blocks.

INTERVIEWER

Are you ever out with your notebook when you think of a sentence or a scene that has to go into the novel you are working on?

DONLEAVY

Yes, ideally that happens, and this is one of the real problems I find living in the country. The country doesn't feed me as a writer at all. I finish work and my mind's a blank. I generally go walking in the fields, perhaps looking at cattle and nothing goes through my mind except the numbing pleasure of watching profit collect on a beast's hindquarters; it's a total waste of an author's time. And this is discouraging, because if you work in a city the moment you step out the door your mind immediately begins to gravitate to and work on the things around you. It doesn't happen in the country. At least, I don't find it that way.

INTERVIEWER

If the city feeds a writer, and the country doesn't, why do you want to live in the country?

DONLEAVY

There are two aspects of writing: one is when you're actually putting down the words, the other is when you're germinating. Cities are better in that stage. But in the working stage the country is better. You can control your environment. Interruptions annoy me and stop my writing. Isolation is a necessity, also an acute loneliness and a sense of slight rejection. Unlike some writers, in ideal working situations I actually work. A lot of writers if they get ideal working situations, it inhibits them.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you make forays to London or go into Dublin for a drunk?

DONLEAVY

Not often. I hardly drink anymore because the effects last so long. Even a glass of wine disturbs my mental balance for the next day's work. Dublin's not pleasant to go into at all. I *do* like going to London. That's splendid. I also like coming to New York, but I go through stages, when I suddenly want to get the hell out. Like now. It can be very corrosive on the person, this town. Very corrosive.

INTERVIEWER

You have a great deal of self-control, a physical regimen that is kept up, a close scrutiny of money, yet your characters are eccentric and bizarre. Does your own self-control allow the imaginative flights that create such zaniness?

DONLEAVY

Yes, I think that's part of it. Because if I were to live my life like some of my characters, I couldn't be an author. An author must be very self-disciplined and have a driving, desperate control of his resources. My physical regimen and workouts are part of this discipline. The body is not made to sit for long stretches of hours. Your heart has to be stimulated and you must get the blood through the system just to clean the sides of the blood vessels. At four o'clock in the afternoon my ears will turn red from work.

INTERVIEWER

Are the hours that you spend writing pleasurable to you?

DONLEAVY

I get waves of pleasantness now and again, but I think I have finally decided they are overall unpleasant. It's unpleasant to have to sit down and work. It's a hurdle you have to get over

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in order to start the machinery of the brain working. It takes a couple of hours each morning. Then, as I reach a high point, at the mid-section of the afternoon, I force myself for as long as I can. I sometimes have to make myself get up from the desk, and do 30 sit-ups and 30 back exercises just to shift the blood around. If I go past four o'clock I begin to notice that my guts start to get all pressed down, and it's time to get up and move around. And at times when I can't indulge the luxury of stopping, by late afternoon I'm kneeling at my desk. Obviously, standing is another method of relieving this. Every writer, I think, has his.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any devices to get you going in the morning?

DONLEAVY

No, just my physical setting. I try not to force myself too much, and to take some leisure. Generally, I eat my breakfast alone about 8 o'clock. From my bedroom I have to walk down a long hall to the main staircase and then downstairs walk the same length of hall back to collect my breakfast and then back again to my work room. I sit there and actually *enjoy* myself. It's a great time because I overlook a southern walled orchard and flower gardens and I gaze out the window, or read the newspaper, or look at an architectural book or listen to the radio. I must say it's momentarily very pleasant. But if I'm really driving myself, battling my way, I forbid myself to read the newspaper or turn on the radio and I just sit there alone eating my breakfast. But usually I drive myself so much all day that in the mornings I don't make it too difficult for myself.

INTERVIEWER

What drives you to write?

DONLEAVY

Money, above all things. Fame goes, but money never does. It's got its own beauty. It's never gone to ashes in my mouth.

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I've always exquisitely enjoyed it. And maybe a little bit of revenge. On those somewhere who may be shouting I can't write to save my ass.

INTERVIEWER

Has money affected your writing in any way?

DONLEAVY

One hundred percent! Totally and absolutely. In fact, I would say that money is everything in my profession. One's mind almost becomes a vast cash register, clicking away (*laughs*). It will only ring if certain valves are struck. To sit at a desk and think, and write, you must have peace, and to buy peace costs a fortune. You can't have people knocking at your door and trying to get money out of you. You have to pay your light bills . . . everything has to be paid for. And therefore, in a capitalistic system, you must become a capitalist as fast as you can.

INTERVIEWER

Has this financial security given you a wider berth in writing more of what you want to write?

DONLEAVY

No, I've never made any distinction that way at all. I *always* sat down to write what I wanted to write and how I wanted to write. I was aware of one thing in my profession: that once you made the mistake of making that distinction, you could no longer call yourself a writer. Rather than that, I was prepared to sweat and struggle and die. I went to live where other people wouldn't dare to live—in slums, in poverty, because I knew that by doing this I could buy time to work. Things haven't changed at all. I'm just on another level of struggle. I'm not any different now.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think of as you work?

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DONLEAVY

I'm conscious first that whomever picks up the book isn't going to sit there bored with it; that I'm telling a story; that I'm not allowed to preach, that I can't use the medium of being an author to be pretentious or profound or smart, that I must keep my humility intact. These are important things for an author to remember.

INTERVIEWER

Has your approach to writing a novel in terms of receiving ideas and setting them down on paper and revising them changed considerably since writing *The Ginger Man*?

DONLEAVY

Probably not a lot. I think probably in writing that book I began to find my way into my working methods, and they've more or less stayed the same. Once the theme of a book is struck, then I write in terms of what I've already written. I remember the day when I started *A Singular Man*. I was sitting in the sunroom of a house out in the west of Ireland, near Clifden in County Galway, and out my window I could see the Atlantic, I was in the middle of my litigations with The Olympia Press over *The Ginger Man* then and I could see the mailman on his bicycle on the winding mountain road coming to me four hours before he arrived, and I'd sit and wonder what bad news he had for me.

I think it must have been the glamor of America, the glamor of New York as opposed to the isolation and poverty of Ireland that started me on the book. There was a cemetery just over a couple of fields where they were no gravestones. When anyone was buried they'd just pile some boulders on the grave. There were no markings, nothing. One was so isolated out there that I remember that day when the local farmer came rushing across the lawn, pointing up to the sky, and yelling, "There's a dog up there." My two children, Philip and Karen, were playing in front of the house. I remember warning my wife that the children should be pulled inside because there was a maniac

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wandering around. I was struck with terror. I had no contact with the outside world and no way of knowing the Russians had sent a dog up in a spaceship. In Ireland when you buy a newspaper, as often as not they put a recent cover on it, but inside will be an old, old, newspaper. They think news is news and vintage news is better than anything. Indeed, in Ireland, to read a local paper that's 50 years old is not much different than reading today's. In that kind of isolation *A Singular Man* came into being.

INTERVIEWER

What do you look for when you revise?

DONLEAVY

What I look for is a kind of inevitability, the words and sentences falling into an inevitable place that relates to what's gone before and that will presage what follows. I mean by inevitability finding the right word or the right sentence. For example, the court scene in *A Fairy Tale of New York* where the lawyers are talking back and forth. There's an inevitable pacing of reactions, or relationships. The summing up speech that the lawyer gives at the end of the trial seemed very awkward, and strange, yet I knew it was correct. I thought it would be fun to try to read it to college audiences, and for some time I couldn't but I kept at it until finally I got it, as an actor finally gets a line. This is the inevitability—the words on the page, which lie there naturally, which don't jar you, and find their own naturalness when they're said or read.

I suppose I think of myself as a sort of scientist, working with words, relating what is going on in my consciousness to what I put on the paper. It's like music . . . an orchestration. As in bell-ringing, when you ring, peal the bells, one echoing sound from one word will echo and sound in another. I try to make the words in a sentence fit exactly what's happening . . . if something is extremely sad all the words will be joined and paced in the rhythm of sadness. If there's fast action, the words will take on action. I work a long time on the sound-sense of

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words. Occasionally I find myself trapped trying to get the rhythms down properly and sometimes something just won't work. There's one spot in *The Ginger Man* that I've never been able to solve to this day. It isn't perfect. I always treat it as a life and death matter when words go in their finality on a page. They must be right. In some ways, I was relieved to know, coming back to that passage ten years later and deliberating over it again, that it couldn't be solved even now till this day with what one assumes is one's accumulated masterliness.

INTERVIEWER

Some of the names of your characters are alliterative and others seem to have particular meanings . . .

DONLEAVY

It's very tough getting names because a name conjures up a person. If you remember an old friend named, say, Sebastian, all the characteristics of that person go with his name and tend to stick to it.

INTERVIEWER

Do you look up names in phone directories?

DONLEAVY

No, I try to think them up. I'm also conscious of vicarious libel and inadvertent identifications, picking names. Sometimes the name has a relationship to the character of the person, but sometimes I just like the flavor of it, Cornelius Christian, for example. Or George Smith, which is a name more people probably have than any other in America.

INTERVIEWER

Is the main character basically what drives your book?

DONLEAVY

Yes, they always seem invariably to revolve around one major character.

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INTERVIEWER

The theme doesn't drive the character, the character drives the theme?

DONLEAVY

I've not ever stopped to figure that out. If you're writing a book you don't, I think, ever resolve that, you just work in terms of what you have.

INTERVIEWER

Is everything in your novels drawn from life or do you imagine some of it?

DONLEAVY

You *think* you imagine things, and sometimes hope you do but you really don't imagine anything completely at all. If you stop and really look into something you think you've imagined, you'll find that it comes out of your life or happened somewhere, sometime. For example, you might describe the hallway of a building or a girl, and think it's imagined, but if you cast your mind back you'll find you saw that hallway or that girl somewhere.

INTERVIEWER

How much of a novel do you know when you start?

DONLEAVY

I have the clearest memory about *Balthazar B*: I was in London passing in a taxi through Knightsbridge, and we were caught in traffic and I just happened to look out of the taxi and standing in front of the Hyde Park Hotel was a man who had been with me at Trinity College, Dublin. I just saw him standing there, and he was someone I had liked immensely. He used to come to see me late in the evenings when I was painting in my rooms. He'd sit for hours talking to me. I couldn't get out of the taxi or shout to him because we were in the middle of traffic. I only saw him for 7 or 8 seconds, but that was the

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beginning of *Balthazar B*—that man's life.

INTERVIEWER

Did the whole novel come into your head as you sat in the taxi?

DONLEAVY

The period came back—its atmosphere and incidents that had affected my own life, some of which had affected his, and the stories. I've never been to an English public school, for instance, but, clearly, having had so many English friends over the years and listening to their tales of school life, writing about it came quite naturally to me. Anyone who has been to public school and picked up *Balthazar B*, God they're back there.

INTERVIEWER

Can you give us an example.

DONLEAVY

Yes, the scene of sewing of the elephant . . . now this came from an incident during the London production of *The Ginger Man*. This chap from Cambridge came into the theatre one day, a young, elegant man who had inherited a shipping fortune and was in the process of spending all of it. My two producers—Philip Wiseman and Tony Walton—had just discovered they suddenly needed another thousand pounds desperately and wondered who the hell they were going to collar to get it and of course the victim had just suddenly and opportunely presented himself, and Tony pounced. This chap stood there and looked at Walton, and a tiny little smile came on his face. He said nothing at all, just nodded yes. I thought, "What an extraordinary thing that he would drop a thousand quid he more than likely would never see again, suddenly like that, with this tiny little smile." In show biz everyone is always conning everyone else, trying to get money out of them to go ahead with a play—it's a desperate blackmail on all sides.

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A long time later I asked him, "What went through your mind when that little glimmer of a smile came on your face?" He said, "Well, I'll tell you. When Tony asked me for the money I was suddenly taken back in my life to when I was a little prep school boy and I was being brought by my nanny to my first school, never having been away from home before, and I had a little elephant. We drove up in this great big chauffeured car to this great awful school—I was let out and led into this school and left in a room where all these little bastards descended upon me and took my elephant and pulled it apart. It was ripped to shreds, and I was beaten up." Later that evening in the dormitory, he said, he was there crying in bed, without this little elephant which he'd always had to hug to sleep at night. And suddenly there appeared at his bedside this little boy who was just at that moment sewing up the last of his elephant to give back to him. Tony Walton, my producer, was that little boy who did this. And that's how I heard that story and it came to be in *Balthazar B.*

INTERVIEWER

Do you have abandoned projects that you got a hundred pages into and dropped?

DONLEAVY

Yes, but I seem always to have gone back to them. There are still a couple of books I still want to go back to, books I couldn't get into because of troubles and difficulties in my life. *A Fairy Tale of New York* was like that. It was originally a novel. But at the time when I was going through so much litigation with The Olympia Press, I couldn't work on it. But I could work on *A Singular Man* because it was in the nature of my litigation: people constantly having to threaten and intimidate other people to get things out of them, particularly money. The first thing a lawyer asks you for is money. You become his victim. I had to leave *A Fairy Tale* until many years later.

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INTERVIEWER

Does your publisher, Seymour Lawrence, act as an editor for you?

DONLEAVY

No, but I think he may be better than an editor, he acts as a conscience but none of my work is touched by anybody except me. No changes whatever are made. Not even spelling, though as you possibly have noticed, I can't spell and I aggravate that by being very stubborn. Someone invariably used to sit down with my manuscript and start to correct spelling and grammar. But there were certain things that I liked the look of or sound of, and I would insist they were left like that. And limousine is now spelled L-I-M-O-Z-I-N-E. I was delighted to learn just recently that Lawrence prefers it that way too.

INTERVIEWER

When do you feel finished with a book? Painters can keep painting and touching up pictures . . .

DONLEAVY

You never know exactly, but suddenly that day arrives and it just happens. It's an instinctive thing.

INTERVIEWER

Are there any writers who have influenced your style or realm of concern?

DONLEAVY

Yes. About four—Henry Miller, obviously James Joyce, even Thomas Wolfe and Franz Kafka especially. Kafka's picture of the world always enthralled me, his vision of man. And his mysterious, anonymous world full of secrets. That's always been one of the largest influences. And Joyce, his use of language, from my early, early days, through interchanging

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first and third person is *my* invention—it has been used by one or two authors *since*.

INTERVIEWER

Another of your specialities is the little poems at the end of chapters.

DONLEAVY

I suppose they're small epitaphs. I wrote one in spontaneously once and then suddenly found myself using them as chapter endings. One always has it in the back of one's head to be a poet. Novelists are often poets to begin with.

INTERVIEWER

Who do you read of your contemporaries?

DONLEAVY

No one. I don't seem to have any contemporaneous literary interests. Literature, I must confess, doesn't greatly attract my attention.

INTERVIEWER

Do you avoid other writers?

DONLEAVY

To some degree and I seem to be deliberate about this, but not rude. I think a writer must be a loner by the nature of the profession. In my own case, I've found any kind of relationship with another author extremely unsatisfactory because frequently the author wants to progress by defeating his fellow. And that's not where the battle is at all. So, I think basically any author who has any kind of serious intention about his profession, should restrict relationships with other writers right away. But in the early stages of his career, a writer *does* need an audience, and another writer can become your best fan because writers are sensitive to good writing. I find that any fans I've *got* are way, way above the man in the street. I am instantly able to assume they're highly intelligent, literate people, that I could feel at ease with at times and at a distance,

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they substitute in a way for literary company. In Europe writers tend to do what I'm talking about now: to isolate themselves and lead private lives. Whereas, in New York everyone seems to know everyone and they get together and talk about their work. There is a point, I suppose, where going to parties is important, but that's not being a writer, that's being in the literary market place. These people, editors, agents, reviewers with a sprinkling of authors constitute a political force in writing—they can in their ouija board manner, decide whose literary stock is up. It's just like the stock market . . . is he up? Is he down? And this affects actors, writers, producers . . . everyone. So a young writer without an audience I suppose has to be out there showing himself. But when you have an audience, the only thing to concern yourself about is who reads your books. That's all. Forget other writers; stay away from them. Sometimes you can't avoid meeting someone else, and then you must be civil.

INTERVIEWER

How about reading their books?

DONLEAVY

Also reading their books. Stay away. It's not your business. Not for a serious author.

INTERVIEWER

You don't think they could be inspiring or useful?

DONLEAVY

No. Under no circumstances whatever.

INTERVIEWER

Do you read any novels at all?

DONLEAVY

No. I don't think I've read a novel for years and years. I pick up an occasional biography about Fitzgerald or some other writer, but I hardly even read those now. I *have* read another

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author inadvertently. Sometimes books are sent to me, and I might open up one and read three or four lines. I know right away whether this is a great author, a bad author, whatever. And I'm usually interested to hear if my wife or someone has enjoyed it. I always like to see authors do well and make out well. The few cases where I've ever reviewed books is when a book has come to me and I knew the author wouldn't get a review unless I did it . . . So I'm concerned over that aspect.

INTERVIEWER

What is the detriment in reading other authors?

DONLEAVY

I think you want to concern yourself with what makes your *own* books, and the only thing that makes your own books is what *you* see, feel, and hear. I'm not afraid of picking up things from them. I'm only concerned that what I *read* isn't something that's gone through the wheels of my own mind; it's already gone through the wheels of somebody else's and is there in print.

INTERVIEWER

You will read the newspaper because it is factual?

DONLEAVY

Yes. Some of the writing that you see in *The New York Times* is quite marvelous. And *The Wall Street Journal*. I pick up those papers and find many events in the world at large that strike me. I actually work with a scissors, and clip out stories about murders and homicides—that type of thing—and take them back to Ireland with me.

INTERVIEWER

Do these stories end up in your books?

DONLEAVY

Just overtones of the situation, the weather perhaps. I cut

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out the weather reports; they are incredible, beautiful things, so marvelously documented: the face of the moon, the tides, the shipping that's going in and out of New York.

INTERVIEWER

How would those things find their way into a book?

DONLEAVY

When writing about New York City, for instance, it always interests me exactly what the subsoil is like, the background, the Indian history of an area . . . even though I may never use it in a book. Another great interest which works in the same way is maps and buildings. I love looking at buildings and have many books on the architecture of New York City. I spend hours looking at these. From these things the atmosphere of a place comes.

INTERVIEWER

What else do you read?

DONLEAVY

I read all sorts of crazy things. Movie magazines, *Screen Gems, Screw,* farming journals. I read about ecology and grasslands and farming a great deal.

INTERVIEWER

How much of the day do you spend reading? Do you read at night?

DONLEAVY

Sometimes in the evening. But I generally don't read to relax. After my work out on the farm, if I haven't got some of my kids and their friends at the house to play soccer with, I take a sauna, and a shower, and then I go swimming. My house is quite an astonishing place, like something I suppose out of Beverly Hills. I have a separate wing for my secretary and an indoor pool in a room which is as long as this room here (*over*

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sixty feet), and three times as high. This is one of the reasons why I don't set foot off the place for months at a time. When I'm finished with the pool and sauna it's about 7:30 pm, and then I go to our upstairs apartment and watch some television in front of a great big blazing fire and often have dinner there. Then I go to bed and repeat that the next day. I'm tired in the evenings. My responsibilities with the farm are immense. There are things happening all the time. Although my wife, who's excellent on a tractor, masters most of these.

INTERVIEWER

Do you let that intrude on you?

DONLEAVY

I used to take time off for the farm when I didn't have to drive myself through the grind of delivering a manuscript. When I go back home I've got it all planned to return to being a gentleman author and farmer . . . stopping work at two o'clock and going out on the farm. I'm a good stone mason, and I enjoy that a lot. I enjoy doing heavy work too.

INTERVIEWER

Do you try to give advice to young writers on getting going?

DONLEAVY

I have given some. Usually to the effect that they go out on their own and fight their own battles; support themselves and accumulate the money to make them writers. I discourage things like grants. I've refused grants that have been offered to me. I think a man has to stand independently and say what he wants, and he's got to pay for it himself . . . like a farmer standing on his own land can say: Get off my land, this belongs to me. It's exactly the same principle. That you are answerable to no one. When I give talks at a college about writing, I talk about the financial aspects of writing, the technicalities of the profession of authorship. I give out advice liberally—since whether I like it or not I've been forced to

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become an authority on contract, copyright, all kinds of business that concerns writers.

INTERVIEWER

What would you say is the best intellectual training for a writer?

DONLEAVY

Get a book on the law of contracts, learn to touch type and take shorthand. All those tough practical things are the things to learn first. Then I think you just have to face up to writing terrible stuff; try to put it down and just keep at it until it loses its self-consciousness. Try to write as if you're writing a letter to a good friend. I think it's as simple as that. That's thirty percent of the struggle. Seventy percent, the rest of it, is getting a good publisher. That's essential, and you must have enough savvy that you can enforce your rights and your position with a publisher—make sure that he treats your books well.

INTERVIEWER

Publicity you mean?

DONLEAVY

Often, yes, promotion, advertising. And readable type, good paper, printing, proper covers, that will last and sell to people. But you can do all these things, and the books will be on the stands and the public won't buy them. There's nothing an author can do about that. There're all sorts of things which sell books—fads, fashions, well-known authors, authors who are *not* well known. For instance, it could be damaging to someone like me or J.D. Salinger to become famous in the famous sense of being famous. A lot of people have secret imaginings and ideals about authors and they don't want these ideals ruined.

INTERVIEWER

Do you get fan mail about your books?

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DONLEAVY

Yes. Often amazingly interesting stuff. Some of them recount experiences. Some tell me how desperately off they are. I don't reply. I figure it's their relationship with the book, not with me, that makes them write. It disillusions them to meet an author because they're dealing with dreams, imaginings that are in the book. The only letters I reply to are professional business letters.

I've had one or two fans turn up where I live. This doesn't often happen. My wife thought one girl was the spitting image of Abigail in *The Saddest Summer of Samuel S*, which I was casting for the theatre, and that I had to take a look at her. She had the girl weeding out in the rose garden and I could see her out my window. She *was* the spitting image of Abigail. Finally, I did meet her out of civility. She'd brought me a bottle of whiskey. And was a pleasant girl. Her first introduction to me *was The Saddest Summer of Samuel S*, interestingly enough.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have an ideal reader?

DONLEAVY

I suppose very isolated, lonely folk. I remember one letter from a girl in a midwestern town who read one of my books and thought she had discovered it—that no one had ever read it or knew about it. Then one day in her local library she found cards for one or two of my other books. They were full of names—the books were borrowed all the time. She resented this a bit and then walked around the town forever after, looking in everybody's face and wondering if they were the ones who were reading my books. That is someone I write for. The only thing which supports me are the fans who read what I write.

INTERVIEWER

Do people ever recognize you?

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DONLEAVY

I was in the Metropolitan Museum of Art a couple of years ago, walking across the lobby, and a man came up and tapped me on the back. He said, "Hello, you're Mr. Donleavy?" I said yes. He said, "Well, I'm sorry to disturb you like this, but I did want you to know that there was someone here in this building who knew who you were." Very curious attitude to take. I've had a lot of funny things happen. Suddenly one day in New York numerous ladies with those blue rinses were turning around and looking at me in the streets. This puzzled me till I found The Book of the Month Club had just sent out one of their brochures for a book of mine with a big picture of me.

The most curious occurence of all was the time I was outside a funeral parlour writing in my notebook and watching everything going on—preparing for *A Fairy Tale of New York*. As I crossed the street after a half-hour on that corner I felt a tap on my back. I turned around and it was a young girl. She was obviously full of trepidation accosting a strange man in New York and she whispered "Are you J.P. Donleavy?" I said yes. She went "Aghhhhhh," and started staggering backwards. We were in the middle of the street and a great truck was coming around the corner right at her. Of course the driver had no idea that the person who was crossing the street would stop in the middle and then rear backwards. I had to jump forward and grab her by both arms and pull her out of the way to save her life.

INTERVIEWER

Does this recognition please you?

DONLEAVY

My wife thinks I'm constantly walking around thinking I'm famous and that someone's recognized me when all they're looking at is my possible bad taste in clothing. I try to avoid this self-conscious thought. But I have to be aware that there may be one man out of 10,000 who knows, "I know who that

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man is.'' They always act a certain way. If I'm walking along the street and someone who is coming toward me suddenly looks down, and smiles as he walks by me, then I know they've recognized me. That reaction happens quite a bit, and I've figured out why they are smiling. They're usually imagining the part in *The Ginger Man* where Dangerfield pulls on the toilet chain and all the crap comes out of the ceiling and down on the head of his wife Marion.

It's a phenomenon that I became conscious of when I returned to the United States. Even though I am not known, not a celebrated author, I have these odd fans I come across nearly anywhere as I perambulate around the streets. After all my years of struggle, it makes me realize that in my own way I have conquered America, totally silently, totally from underground and from within and that television or being interviewed doesn't matter.

INTERVIEWER

Do you pay attention to critics?

DONLEAVY

Only in a fairly superficial way—the size of reviews, where they appear. But I will read the well-written ones. Which some are. In America the critics have treated me over-all extremely well. But I usually only read enough to have an idea of whether they're going to be damaging, and what must be done to try to protect the book.

INTERVIEWER

How would you protect a book from a review?

DONLEAVY

I don't suppose you can, really. There was one U.S. reviewer who wrote a review which was perhaps the worst and most damaging thing that has ever been written about me, saying that I had extracted huge advances from my publishers and had written one failure after another, and that I had just

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written another total failure which he was presently reviewing. It was highly, highly damaging, yet I laughed when I first saw it. Only after a while I realized that it was not amusing at all and was a deliberate and calculated attack for his own personal reasons. And this was in fact confirmed when I later heard about the background of the man.

INTERVIEWER

But your writing isn't affected?

DONLEAVY

No. Because a writer must always be aware that he has to be a supreme critic. He's an awfully bad writer if he isn't. And only his judgement matters. This allows you to work in all kinds of conditions and climates of opinion. It is essential. If you're wrong, there will be nobody around listening when you say you're right.

INTERVIEWER

Some critics have called you a "black humorist." Do you think of yourself that way?

DONLEAVY

Not much, no. I've been classified, as a lot of writers have, in a dozen different categories, starting with "the angry young man." In fact, that's how I first got published in America; John Osborne was interviewed and he said, "There's a man who wrote a book over there who's not an Englishman at all, who's another 'angry young man'."

INTERVIEWER

So you think of critics only in relation to the commercial success of the book?

DONLEAVY

Well at least to its recognition. Reviews don't necessarily sell a book. It's a free medium in which books get attention. Yet,

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in England where my books have on occasion been quite badly treated by critics, the publishers just laugh about the effect on sales. Although when I saw three of four panning reviews in the Sunday press, I did get worried, but they weren't concerned. In paperback, particularly, nothing stops the books.

INTERVIEWER

Why do you think the critics are so rude?

DONLEAVY

A lot of it is political. All writers have a political position and naturally a critic wants to treat this position because that's his business. That's how he makes his living and finds *his* position. I did uncover what was happening in the English case of the ridicule of *Balthazar B*. There was one panning review of *A Singular Man* which got a lot of attention in England. It got sent out to all the papers and was kept in their dead files. So when a reviewer was handed my new book, he went and opened up the dead file and found this panning review of *A Singular Man*, so he followed up with a panning review of the next book. So ever since in certain papers I've had a series of panning reviews.

INTERVIEWER

Do they like your writing in Ireland?

DONLEAVY

On a critical level not especially, no. I'm resented and hated, bitterly I would think.

INTERVIEWER

Has *The Ginger Man* appeared there?

DONLEAVY

No, it's still banned. I remember *A Fairy Tale of New York* came out and not one review appeared in any Irish newspaper. At the same time, hardly much time goes by but that some-

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thing referring to me will be in the papers. And reviews appeared in all the English periodicals. So it was most curious no critical notice of *A Fairy Tale of New York* appeared in Ireland. The resentment still rages. Yet, incredibly, the Irish government allows authors to live tax-free. Also composers, painters, sculptors.

INTERVIEWER

Do you consider your new book, *The Unexpurgated Code*, a major departure? It is your first non-fiction.

DONLEAVY

I don't know quite how to classify it. I think it's possibly still fiction. But I think it came from the business of changing with some frequency from the courteous society of London to the semi-discourteous one of New York.

INTERVIEWER

Does the *Code* reflect more of a social reality that is still current in England and Ireland than it is here? This country is sort of a classless society . . .

DONLEAVY

I don't think so. I regard American society as the most snobbish, the most class-ridden society of all. Much more than England. All you have to do is read a social column in *The Daily News*, or these advice columns to find out how much importance is placed on social image. It's immense! I may be more aware of it because my Irish background, and this cultural background isolated me in America, although I never realized that socially by definition I was lower class. Now, superimposed on that, imagine going to Ireland and finding one's ancestry and antecedents predate the Mayflower, the Daughters of this and that and most American family histories. So in a strange way I had feet in two different camps. A friend of mine, called A.K. Donoghue, was very conscious always of being "lower-class"—in a Boston Irish sense.

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INTERVIEWER

You knew him at Trinity?

DONLEAVY

Yeah. And although he denies anything to do with *The Ginger Man*, he is, I suppose, the prototype for Kenneth O'Keefe. He was raised in an Irish ghetto or community in Boston, and he would constantly remind me of my social position. He thought I was assuming all kinds of airs because I was a New York Irishman who *hadn't* been raised in an Irish ghetto. He knew his place—he was socially beyond the pale. And we had this dialogue over all these years. "Donleavy, you know, you're putting on airs. You're walking around with the latest English accent in a good suit. Don't you know what you are?" And I saying, "No, I haven't an idea."

When he went to Harvard, he was ostracized, couldn't join any of the good clubs, and was one of the Boston boys who appeared with his lunch bag. Later, he *changed* his accent through phonetics. This amused me and became part of *The Code*, as a lesson on how to social climb.

INTERVIEWER

Where is Donoghue now?

DONLEAVY

He's back in America, in California. He is presently a hospital mortuary technician in Sacramento. But he also gives lectures on medical subjects and writes journalism and poetry. I asked him how he liked his job, and he said "I hate it; it stinks."

INTERVIEWER

Did your move to Ireland change the path of your life?

DONLEAVY

Yes. Utterly. It also romanticized the United States for me so that it became a subject for me as a writer, very much as

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Dublin was to Joyce, since Joyce wrote mostly on the continent of Europe.

INTERVIEWER

You studied zoology at Trinity College. Why?

DONLEAVY

I was always interested in medicine and science. But I *knew* that I was going to be a writer. Donoghue was someone who used to come into my rooms at Trinity and see something in the typewriter and glance at it. I'd ask him, "What do you think of that, Donoghue?" and he'd say "It stinks!" This went on for days and days every time he'd come in trying to get food from me. And then—he was a classicist—one night I typed out some Plato and left it in my typewriter, and I had it ready for him as he popped in. And I said, "Okay, Donoghue, there it is in the typewriter. Now let's have your opinion on that." "That stinks too." "Look, Donoghue, I've tried awfully hard with this." He'd say, "Doesn't matter. You're never going to make it." I made him give it a second reading, but he said it still stunk. Then I revealed to him it was Plato. And that stopped him staring at my typewriter. He finally conceded, "What the hell, you work hard, maybe you'll make it."

INTERVIEWER

How do your friends like Donoghue and other acquaintances feel about finding themselves or incidents of their lives in your books?

DONLEAVY

I'm not quite sure. We've never talked about it, but I suppose it has appealed to their vanity. In Donoghue's case I think he entirely ignores it. But I've often thought, Good Lord, no one's ever put *me* in a book. Why the hell doesn't someone write about me once in a while—feeling totally overlooked because no one thinks I'm worth writing about.

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INTERVIEWER

Did the incident of the toilet overflowing happen?

DONLEAVY

Yes, and it was far worse than described in *The Ginger Man*. The thing that made it so extraordinary was that everyone was sitting in the living room on a social occasion, and Gainor Crist, who's often thought of as Dangerfield, pulled the toilet chain and everything came pouring out of the ceiling. It took over two hours for the debris to be cleaned up. It was on a Sunday afternoon and I must have had to visit the gent's and he walked up with me because he was talking earnestly on some temporarily major topic and I was the only man who would listen without question to everything he had to say; he was also the only man in the world who ever listened to *me* unquestioningly. So we were very good together. At any rate, we mounted the stair and we went to the lavatory, where we both urinated. Having already showered everybody in the place and having already been told 50 times going up the staircase not to pull the goddam chain, he got engrossed in this story. He said, "Mike, I can tell you if there's one thing in this world I'm going to do . . . " and he reached up and grabbed the chain again and pulled it to make his point forcefully. And then up came the screams. Everyone was immersed for the second time!

INTERVIEWER

What's he doing now?

DONLEAVY

He's dead, actually.

INTERVIEWER

Donoghue said about you: where most of us become afraid of death at about age 40, you were always afraid of death. Is that so?

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DONLEAVY

I was quite obsessed with it always, and fascinated by it. Still am. It has always frightened me in the United States. I'm very fearful of dying and death here. I'm tense everyday until my wife gets home. You can't walk in comfort anywhere in this city. You have to be constantly conscious of what's going on around you. It makes it impossible for me to conduct my business as an author . . . I don't get any chance for reverie. You build up this fear and suddenly the fear is all around you. It prevents you from enjoying anything. You're constantly surprised as you walk out into the street to find it's a sunny day and people are walking along unhampered in their lives.

INTERVIEWER

Do you remember growing up with fear at all?

DONLEAVY

No, I don't. No. I keep thinking back to the period which *Fairy Tale in New York* concerns—the years around 1950. I don't recall there being the kind or extent of street violence there is now.

I don't have feelings like that in Ireland. There you die in your bed if you possibly can, and are taken to your cemetery. I did have a cemetery in the previous house I had. I'm now hoping to have another private cemetery on this place, but I'll need county council approval.

INTERVIEWER

Is it easy to establish a private cemetery?

DONLEAVY

Yes, you just get planning permission

INTERVIEWER

You can't bury anybody on your front lawn?

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DONLEAVY

Yes you can. There was in fact a case where a gentleman in England buried his wife in his back garden. The neighbors objected and it was taken to Court and he won. You can, in fact, bury yourself where you like.

—MOLLY McKAUGHAN
(Assisted by
Fayette Hickox)

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The Smiling Mandarin

Ray Russell

One night, David had a dream that was nothing more than a book title:

The Cosmological Imperative

Upon awakening, he was not sure if his dream had included a visual image of a book bearing that title, or if the title had existed by itself, floating in space, as it were. Was he supposed to have written it? He didn't know. He called the public library and a large book store. There was no such book.

Another night, he dreamed he was an actor on a stage. This in itself was not remarkable, for he had done some acting, in a small way, years before. In the dream, he was performing in a play by Shakespeare. At one point, he uttered this speech:

Man, proud man,
Dressed in a little brief authority,
Struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.

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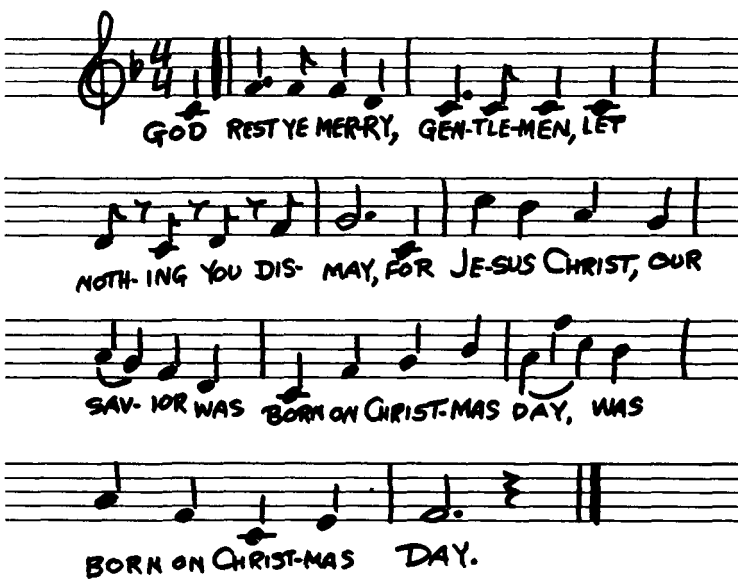
When he was awake, he marveled at those words, and at the cunning of his sleeping mind. The speech made perfect sense, but it was from two different plays. The first two lines were from *Measure for Measure*. The last two lines were from *Macbeth*. He found this charming, and he felt rather proud of himself.

On another night—this was during the Christmas season—he had a purely auditory dream of the carol, *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*. The words were the familiar ones everybody knows, but the music was not the traditional air. In his sleep, he had composed a new tune, which he still remembered when awake. He was afraid he would lose it, so he kept running it over and over in his mind, humming it in the shower, thus keeping a firm hold on it until he reached his father's apartment where there was an available piano. It was an old upright piano, the same one he had used years before in his short-lived musical studies. He picked out the dream melody on the keys and wrote it down on the staves of a music note book he found among his student materials, carefully preserved by his mother through the years. This is the tune:



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David was fully aware that it was in no way superior to the traditional melody, and was not particularly easy to sing because it had too wide a range (that leap from A up to F on the word "day" was particularly tough). What interested and puzzled him was why his sleeping self should be dissatisfied with the familiar tune and go to the trouble of composing another one?

In the first three months after his mother's death, he had three dreams about her.

The first of these, which he dreamed the night of the evening she died, was just an image of her face, smiling, serene, immobile, like a photograph, large, in close-up, filling the dream, then quickly receding to a pinpoint in the far distance. That was all. The sweetness and tenderness of her smile seemed to be saying to him, "I am at peace."

In the second dream, he was sitting on the couch in his living room. The room was exactly as it is in reality, except for a telephone on an end table next to the couch (there is no phone in the actual living room). His mother walked into the room and picked up the phone. "Going to call someone?" he asked her. "I'm going to talk to my sister," she said. He got up and left the room, so that she could have a private conversation, and as he passed her, he lightly kissed her cheek, which was surprisingly cool—not clammily or repugnantly cold, but pleasantly cool—and it was then he remembered that not only was her sister dead but so was she. With that, came the realization that he was in a dream, and so he immediately woke up. He always awakened from dreams when he recognized them as such.

The third dream was the most mundane of them all. The day before, he had visited his bereaved father (as he had been doing every morning since his mother's death) and the two men had been looking through some old phonograph records that had been in the family ever since David was a small child. One, on the Brunswick lable, was of Nick Lucas ("The Crooning Troubadour") doing, on one side, the popular song, *Singing in the Rain*; and, on the other side, a long-forgotten sentimental ballad called *Your Mother and Mine.* Another,

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on the Regal label, was Vincent Lopez and his orchestra playing *Happy Days Are Here Again;* on the other side, a novelty number, *'Tain't No Sin (To Take Off Your Skin and Dance Around in Your Bones)*. David and his father reminded each other that Vincent Lopez announced the names of the selections at the beginning of each side, and announced his own name, too, with the phrase, "Lopez speaking"—but the recording (or his speaking voice) was of such poor quality that it always sounded like "No fair speaking." The oldest of the records dated back to the early Thirties or possibly even the late Twenties. The next night, in his dream, he sat in a kitchen—a dream kitchen he'd never known in his waking life—while his mother busied herself with housekeeping chores, cooking or washing dishes, later he couldn't remember which (on income tax forms, in the blank space for "Occupation," she always wrote, "Happy Housewife"). David sat there at the kitchen table and said, "Dad and I were looking through those old records of ours yesterday." His mother turned from her work and smiled and nodded, as if in approval.

"These dreams involving my mother have perfectly natural explanations," David wrote to his ex-psychiatrist one Saturday afternoon, his compact typewriter chattering in the silent sealed chamber of his study. "Wish-fulfillment and so on. Materialists, rational men, would say they're all the self-contained products of my own mind. You, doctor, would have fun finding symbols. But just suppose that the mystics and transcendentalists are right, and you and I are wrong? What if the dreams were communications between the living and the dead? If they were, then in the first dream, which I had just a few hours after her death, she was indeed assuring me she was at peace. The second dream was her way of telling me she was now able to talk to her dead sister—but that statement of plain, if supernatural, fact was presented in the everyday context of the telephone, to keep it free of eeriness (the last thing a mother would want to do would be to frighten her son). In the third dream, it was I who wanted to communicate. I wanted her to know how my father and I had so pleasantly and nostal-

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gically looked through those old records together. And her silent response was a way of saying, 'Yes, I know. I'm glad.' Think about it, Doctor.''

He signed, sealed, stamped the letter, and mailed it during an afternoon walk down smoggy side-streets. It was a lot cheaper than a visit, and it served much the same function: got things off his chest, helped organize his thinking. Dr. Lee never answered, but David didn't mind. He had stopped going to the doctor several months before, and now his only contact was this occasional one-way correspondence.

Dr. R. Edwin Lee was a young man, just setting up private practice. In one of their early sessions, David had asked him what the R was for, and was told Robert. Thereafter, David had referred to him (not in his presence) as either Robert E. Lee or as ''my Chink shrink.'' He thought it distinctive to have a psychiatrist of Chinese descent.

His afternoon stroll, past shops and dwellings sharply evocative of his boyhood, took him near Dr. Lee's office. The doctor often saw patients on Saturdays, so on the spur of the moment David decided it would be amusing to pay him a surprise visit.

It was a surprise for David as well. Dr. Lee had changed. In place of the young Asian-American with U.S. accent, bell bottoms and bright turtleneck, David saw an ancient mandarin with long white Fu Manchu mustaches, dressed in a conservative blue serge business suit. The old man's speech was grammatical, correct, but delivered in a high sing-song. After preliminary greetings and courtesies, they both sat down and Dr. Lee pronounced the first of several proverbs of the fortune-cookie variety. It was: ''Man does not live by bread alone, nor iron bars a cage.'' Others followed, none of which David could later recall, but he did recall himself referring to them as ''homily grits,'' which at the time he said it struck him as killingly witty.

''I wish, my dear David, to discuss your work,'' said Dr. Lee. ''I am particularly interested in *The Cosmological Imperative*, which I think Book-of-the-Month will snap up and is a cinch

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to be serialized in the *Journal*. Paperback bidding should be brisk—Beast will go to half a mill just for openers, or I miss my guess . . . " The doctor rambled on (his voice rising and falling like a theramin solo), and David was later to admire Beast as the name of a paperback house. How fitting in so many ways: there *was* something bestial, carnivorous, a whiff of the jungle about the big paperback publishers, and a lot of them, American and British, had some sort of non-human name or colophon—Bantam, Penguin, Pelican, Puffin, Panther, Corgi, Pan, the kangaroo of Pocket Books, didn't there used to be a Lion? . . .

"I'm sure you realize," Dr. Lee was saying, "that the book title is merely a composite of other titles filed away in your mind and fragmentarily recalled while you slept. You pieced them together in much the same way you telescoped those lines from two different Shakespearean flotows."

"But the Shakespeare makes sense. The book title doesn't."

"Aha! Not to 'materialists', not to 'rational men'." The doctor made mocking quote marks in the air with his fingers. "Mystics, transcendentalists, would intuitively grasp the mythopoeic linkage between the words, the Eisensteinian *montage* that happens when those two previously unrelated frames of film are spliced together. This occult crap is big right now, kid. Why shouldn't you get a piece of the action? Confucius say, Faint heart ne'er struck while iron was hot."

"What about my mother? How does she figure in?"

Dr. Lee smiled, just like Warner Oland used to do as Charlie Chan. He tapped his chest, in the vicinity of his heart. "Deep down here, where the tall corn grows, the public is still a patsy for the Mother Machree routine. And if Mother Machree is dead, so much the better. Just trot out the old Hello-Central-Give-Me-Heaven bit—*love* your telephone dream!—never fails. A tear in the eye, a catch in the throat, bread in the bank."

David started to say, "That Christmas carol . . . "

"Time's up," said Dr. Lee. "We'll talk about it next visit. But if you play your cards right, it'll hit the top of the charts.

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I come in for fifty percent of the take."

"Fifty! I should think ten would be—" At this point, David woke up.

Was this Saturday or Sunday? Lying in bed, he had difficulty marking the exact place where reality had become dream. Had he actually written and mailed a letter to the doctor, or was that part of the dream? Had he, perhaps, written it but dreamed the walk to the mailbox, and was the letter still on his desk?

He got up and walked, naked, into his study to see. Elderly Dr. Lee was sitting at David's desk, reading the letter. He looked up, squinting over his glasses, and, pointing to David's exposed member, made jocular remarks. The study was now Dr. Lee's office. The doctor abruptly shoved the letter at David with a look of—disdain? disapproval? disappointment? dismay? Examining it, David discovered that although it was typed on his own crackling stiff letterhead, it was entirely in Chinese. He awoke.

Lying in bed, he continued to be unsure that he had really written and mailed a letter to the doctor. He got out of bed, nude as usual, and walked into his study. His mother was sitting at his desk. She gave him an angelic smile. He awoke.

Lying in bed, he still wondered about that letter. But drowsiness overcame him and he drifted again into sleep. He was in Dr. Lee's office, fully clothed, but the old doctor was in the nude. The skin of his body was as smooth as an olive. His desk was a piano. David's Christmas carol was on the music rack. Dr. Lee said, "It needs work. That A to F interval is pretty hard to sing." David awoke.

He arose, naked, but before visiting his study he put on a robe and went to the bathroom. The tiles were ice to his bare feet. There was a putrid flavor in his mouth. He dispelled it with mint toothpaste. Then he walked into his study. The letter was there, on his desk, stamped and sealed, unmailed. He opened it, read it quickly, and dropped it into the wastebasket. Rolling a fresh sheet of letterhead into his typewriter, he began to tap out: "Dear Dr. Lee . . . "

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He stopped, sighed, and ripped the paper from the machine. He reached for the phone and punched the doctor's number to make an appointment. Busy signal. He hung up, wondering what the hell a flotow was. The composer of the opera *Martha* was all he could come up with (No, Mr. Bones, my mother's name was not Martha). He tried the doctor's number again. As it began to ring, David tried to visualize the young face of the real Dr. Lee. He couldn't. It had been usurped by the smiling face of the old mandarin.

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Three Poems by Pat Wilson

KLEENEX BOXES

Although I keep a kleenex box in each room to wipe up cereal and apple juice, it's not always easy to find one when I need it.

My kitchen is like New York State. Sprawled out and with divergent needs, it requires more than one kleenex box. Aside from the downstate confluence of Tri-Borough, George Washington and Throgs Necks Bridges, I have placed a kleenex box at a few of the second-string stress points which parallel the New York State Thruway,—at Syracuse which is on my kitchen table and at Albany which is next to the toaster.

Sometimes when Marian has just spit up, it's quicker, however, to slip across state lines, over into New Jersey—the telephone stand in the dining room, than to traipse all the way over to Buffalo where I change her diapers on the far counter, adjacent to Lake Erie.

Cities like kleenex boxes, don't always operate efficiently within state borders. People who live in Pennsylvania, work in Wilmington; live in Ohio, shop in Detroit; live in Connecticut, dine in New York City; visit Juarez, sleep in El Paso.

It is not surprising then, that Trenton, although the capital and centrally located,—on the middle of my dining room table,—does not receive nearly as many requests for kleenex as my crowded telephone stand stuffed into the corner next to the Newark Airport and the Orange oil refineries.

I'm waiting for the time that I'll be back to just one kleenex box. I'm thinking of settling it in Larchmont.

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A SPRING MORNING

How hard it was to fit the last crayon into the bulging box; like the last person who pushes onto the elevator and is resented by the insiders.

I seem to remember that the most serious crayons lay supine, each in its own private crenulated gulley. But the more middle class Crayolas, 64 colors in a green and yellow box, stood upright on graduated risers, like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

Lying on my stomach on the cool, porous cement porch, young evergreens pawing at the screen, I honed each crayon to a stalactite peak and then pricked my index finger to test it,—my knees bent, my bare feet dangling overhead.

MY FORTUNE

After long years of inner matter coming down out of the mountains of my central tract,—a monthly parade of blood, babies, drips and pale traces, I expect someday a tiny piece of paper that, unrolled, will read, "The End."

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Three Poems by L.L. Zeiger

MESSAGE

Psst. This is just for you, whoever you are, and not for any of the others. I am so excited by the possibility that you will be the one to read this that I cannot contain myself any longer. You will know who I am, won't you, even though I deliberately make one or too common spelling errers so the others won't guess my identity? I want to tell you finally, in *public*, how much you mean two me.

If you are the secret shoe fetishist—there's one in every group, you understand—then please slip away and meet me at the sneaker bar of a major department store. If you are the tender child molester, know that I am young at heart. If you are in a wheelchair at the home and hospital for the incurably aged, especially if Yiddish or Italian-speaking, I can be everything to you. If you are female, please believe that I have always wanted to make love to someone with breasts. If you do not like the opposite sex, whichever one that is, be reassured that neither do I.

I am hopeful that there will be a way for us to get together. And nothing about you will surprise me or repel me—not even your foulest odors or your most incredible habits. Take me with you, I beg you. For I am so full of love for you that I cannot bear it much longer. These words are for you, and you alone. I want to become part of you for most of the rest of your life.

THE WRITER

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THE COFFEE

We miss the coffee. For so many weeks we had waited. None of us knew when it would come. Each time there were rumors—tonight, yes, tonight there will be the coffee. One night for no apparent reason (we had long given up hope) we opened the door and found the coffee.

The hallway was brilliant. Two girls like angels enthroned beside urns blessed us with coffee. They had made a little sign with the prices neatly lettered. Everything was clear—they had made all the decisions. Nothing was omitted, nothing was forgotten.

The thick slices of pound cake leaned cozily against each other. The doughnuts were crushed and misshapen but freshly powdered and oozing jelly. From our paper cups we sipped the steaming coffee. In our hands we held the cakes that we had chosen.

We did not have to move our mouths for one another without saying what we really meant. We did not have to walk back and forth away from the lights. We did not have to hide our fingers. We could even hold them high and lick them of their sweetness.

That was the only time we knew the coffee. Now we wait again but we doubt that it will come. Perhaps it would have been better if they had never allowed us to taste it. For now it is harder than ever. We miss the coffee.

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SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS

How exactly *does* one soothe the savage breast? Surely not only with music—and if, indeed, with music, with what *kind* of music, then? Gypsy lullabies, whale song, Gregorian chants, two-part inventions? Rhythm and blues, dirges, mouth music? Plain song, liebeslieder, toccatas and fugues?

And how will we know when the savage breast is finally soothed? Will it lie docile as a dug, sagging a little in perfect bliss, sucking softly on the milk of human kindness, its aureole hazy with happiness?

And what is happening to the *other* breast all the while we are soothing the one in question? Does it feel like an untouchable, left out, neglected, the poor sister? Or is this word *breast* an all-embracing singular like *ear* or *man*?

And what *is* a savage breast, in the first place? Is it livid, pulsing with rage, its purple veins popping, the nipple furiously erect? Will it snarl and bite? Or is it noble? Is it attuned to the spheres? Will it be friendly to sympathetic strangers who wish to study its habits? Does it wear anything above the waist?

And finally, if this expression is, as some people surmise, really about the savage *beast*, with no *r* in it at all, then in what way shall we utilize the foregoing questions to augment the body of civilized knowledge?

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John Steinbeck

The Art of Fiction XLV (Continued)

This winter, The Viking Press will publish the fourth volume of Writers at Work, *continuing its collections of interviews on the craft of fiction from* The Paris Review. *Included will be the "interview" with John Steinbeck which was published in the Fall 1969, number 48 of* The Paris Review. *As is recounted in the introduction, Steinbeck had hoped to do a recorded interview with the magazine, but kept postponing it until his death put an end to the matter altogether. In respect to his evinced hope to have something in the magazine on the subject, a composite of material on the craft of his writing was assembled, mostly from his diary kept during the creation of* East of Eden (*published in December, 1969 by The Viking Press under the title* Journey of a Novel).

Since then, much additional material on the subject has been unearthed during the compiling of Steinbeck's letters (to be published this fall by The Viking Press under the title Steinbeck: A Life in Letters). *The "interview" to be published in* Writers at Work *will incorporate much of this new mate-*

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rial—some of it not in the collected letters. In some cases, we have substituted letters for material published in the original "interview."

These new sections appear herewith—the quotes organized under topic headings rather than chronologically, as they are in the diaries.

ON GETTING STARTED

It is usual that the moment you write for publication—I mean one of course—one stiffens in exactly the same way one does when one is being photographed. The simplest way to overcome this is to write it *to* someone, like me. Write it as a letter aimed at one person. This removes the vague terror of addressing the large and faceless audience and it also, you will find, will give a sense of freedom and a lack of self-consciousness.

—From a letter to Pascal Covici, April 13, 1956

Now let me give you the benefit of my experience in facing 400 pages of blank stock—the appalling stuff that must be filled. I know that no one really wants the benefit of anyone's experience which is probably why it is so freely offered. But the following are some of the things I have had to do to keep from going nuts.

1. Abandon the idea that you are ever going to finish. Lose track of the 400 pages and write just one page for each day; it helps. Then when it gets finished, you are always surprised.

2. Write freely and as rapidly as possible and throw the whole thing on paper. Never correct or rewrite until the whole thing is down. Rewrite in process is usually found to be an excuse for not going on. It also interferes with flow and rhythm which can only come from a kind of unconscious association with the material.

3. Forget your generalized audience. In the first place, the

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nameless, faceless audience will scare you to death and in the second place, unlike the theatre, it doesn't exist. In writing, your audience is one single reader. I have found that sometimes it helps to pick out one person—a real person you know, or an imagined person and write to that one.

4. If a scene or a section gets the better of you and you still think you want it—bypass it and go on. When you have finished the whole you can come back to it and then you may find that the reason it gave trouble is because it didn't belong there.

5. Beware of a scene that becomes too dear to you, dearer than the rest. It will usually be found that it is out of drawing.

6. If you are using dialogue—say it aloud as you write it. Only then will it have the sound of speech.

—From a letter to Robert Wallsten, February, 1962

ON INSPIRATION

I hear via a couple of attractive grapevines that you are having trouble writing. God! I know this feeling so well. I think it is never coming back—but it does—one morning, there it is again.

About a year ago, Bob Anderson [the playwright] asked me for help in the same problem. I told him to write poetry—not for selling—not even for seeing—poetry to throw away. For poetry is the mathematics of writing and closely kin to music. And it is also the best therapy because sometimes the troubles come tumbling out.

Well, he did. For six months he did. And I have three joyous letters from him saying it worked. Just poetry—anything and not designed for a reader. It's a great and valuable privacy.

I only offer this if your dryness goes on too long and makes you too miserable. You may come out of it any day. I have. The words are fighting each other to get out.

—From a letter to Robert Wallsten, February 19, 1960.

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ON VERSE

Certain events such as love, or a national calamity, or May, bring pressure to bear on the individual, and if the pressure is strong enough, something in the form of verse is bound to be squeezed out. National calamities and loves have been few in my life, and I do not always succumb to May.

My first gem called forth quite adverse criticism, although I considered it extremely apropos at the time. It was published on a board fence, and was in the form of free verse. It ran something like this:

Gertie loves Tom, and
Tom loves Gertie.

This is the only one of my brain children which has attracted attention, and the attention it attracted has made me backward about publishing any of my later works.

—*From a letter to Professor*
William Herbert Carruth, early 1920's.

ON THE SHORT STORY

Although it must be a thousand years ago that I sat in your class in story writing at Stanford, I remember the experience very clearly. I was bright-eyed and bushy-brained and prepared to absorb from you the secret formula for writing good short stories, even great short stories.

You canceled this illusion very quickly. The only way to write a good short story, you said, was to write a good short story. Only after it is written can it be taken apart to see how it was done. It is a most difficult form, you told us, and the proof lies in how very few great short stories there are in the world.

The basic rule you gave us was simple and heartbreaking. A story to be effective had to convey something from writer to

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reader and the power of its offering was the measure of its excellence. Outside of that, you said, there were no rules. A story could be about anything and could use any means and technique at all—so long as it was effective.

As a subhead to this rule, you maintained that it seemed to be necessary for the writer to know what he wanted to say, in short, what he was talking about. As an exercise we were to try reducing the meat of a story to one sentence, for only then could we know it well enough to enlarge it to three or six or ten thousand words.

So there went the magic formula, the secret ingredient. With no more than that you set us on the desolate lonely path of the writer. And we must have turned in some abysmally bad stories. If I had expected to be discovered in a full bloom of excellence, the grades you gave my efforts quickly disillusioned me. And if I felt unjustly criticized, the judgments of editors for many years afterwards upheld your side, not mine.

It seemed unfair. I could read a fine story and could even know how it was done, thanks to your training. Why could I not do it myself? Well, I couldn't, and maybe it's because no two stories dare be alike. Over the years I have written a great many stories and I still don't know how to go about it except to write it and take my chances.

If there is a magic in story writing, and I am convinced that there is, no one has ever been able to reduce it to a recipe that can be passed from one person to another. The formula seems to lie solely in the aching urge of the writer to convey something he feels important to the reader. If the writer has that urge, he may sometimes but by no means always find the way to do it.

It is not so very hard to judge a story after it is written, but after many years, to start a story still scares me to death. I will go so far as to say that the writer who is not scared is happily unaware of the remote and tantalizing majesty of the medium.

I wonder whether you will remember one last piece of advice you gave me. It was during the exuberance of the rich and frantic Twenties and I was going out into that world to try

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to be a writer.

You said, "It's going to take a long time, and you haven't any money. Maybe it would be better if you could go to Europe."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because in Europe poverty is a misfortune, but in America it is shameful. I wonder whether or not you can stand the shame of being poor."

It wasn't too long afterwards that the depression came down. Then everyone was poor and it was no shame any more. And so I will never know whether or not I could have stood it. But surely you were right about one thing, Edith. It took a long time—a very long time. And it is still going on and it has never got easier. You told me it wouldn't.

—From a letter to Edith Mirrielees, March 8, 1962

ON HACK WRITING

I think the manuscript ["Murder at Full Noon"] enclosed in this package is self-explanatory. For some time now, I have been unhappy. The reason is that I have a debt and it is making me miserable.

It is quite obvious that people do not want to buy the things I have been writing. Therefore, to make the money I need, I must write the things they want to read. In other words, I must sacrifice artistic integrity for a little while to personal integrity. Remember this when this manuscript makes you sick. And remember that it makes me a great deal sicker than it does you.

Conrad said that only two things sold, the very best and the very worst. From my recent efforts, it has been borne to me that I am not capable of writing the very best yet. I have no doubt that I shall be able to in the future, but at present, I cannot. It remains to be seen whether I can write the very worst.

I will tell you a little bit about the enclosed ms. It was writ-

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ten complete in nine days. It is about sixty two or three thousand words long. It took two weeks to type. In it I have included all the cheap rackets I know of, and have tried to make it stand up by giving it a slightly burlesque tone. No one but my wife and my folks know that I have written it, and no one except you will know. I see no reason why a *nom de plume* should not be respected and maintained. The *nom de plume* I have chosen is Peter Pym.

The story holds water better than most, and I think it has a fairish amount of mystery. The burlesqued bits, which were put in mostly to keep my stomach from turning every time I sat down at the typewriter, may come out.

—From a letter to Amasa Miller, December 1930

ON COMPETITION

You know I was born without any sense of competition. This is a crippling thing in many ways. I don't gamble because it is meaningless. I used to throw the javelin far, but I never really cared whether it was farthest. For a while I was a vicious fighter but it wasn't to win. It was to get it over and get the hell out of there. And I never would have done it at all if other people hadn't put me in the ring. The only private fights I ever had were those I couldn't get away from. Consequently I have never even wondered about the comparative standing of writers. I don't understand that. Writing to me is a deeply personal, even a secret function and when the product is turned loose it is cut off from me and I have no sense of its being mine. Consequently criticism doesn't mean anything to me. As a disciplinary matter, it is too late.

—From a letter to John O'Hara, June 8, 1949

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ON PUBLISHING

Although some times I have felt that I held fire in my hands and spread a page with shining—I have never lost the weight of clumsiness, of ignorance, of aching inability.

A book is like a man—clever and dull, brave and cowardly, beautiful and ugly. For every flowering thought there will be a page like a wet and mangy mongrel, and for every looping flight a tap on the wing and a reminder that wax cannot hold the feathers firm too near the sun.

Well—then the book is done. It has no virtue any more. The writer wants to cry out—"Bring it back! Let me rewrite it or better—Let me burn it. Don't let it out in the unfriendly cold in that condition."

As you know better than most, Pat, the book does not go from writer to reader. It goes first to the lions—editors, publishers, critics, copy readers, sales department. It is kicked and slashed and gouged. And its bloodied father stands attorney.

EDITOR

The book is out of balance. The reader expects one thing and you give him something else. You have written two books and stuck them together. The reader will not understand.

WRITER

No, sir. It goes together. I have written about one family and used stories about another family as—well, as counterpoint, as rest, as contrast in pace and color.

EDITOR

The reader won't understand. What you call counterpoint only slows the book.

WRITER

It has to be slowed—else how would you know when it goes fast?

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EDITOR

You have stopped the book and gone into discussions of God knows what.

WRITER

Yes, I have. I don't know why. Just wanted to. Perhaps I was wrong.

SALES DEPARTMENT

The book's too long. Costs are up. We'll have to charge five dollars for it. People won't pay $5. They won't buy it.

WRITER

My last book was short. You said then that people won't buy a short book.

PROOFREADER

The chronology is full of holes. The grammar has no relation to English. On page so and so you have a man look in the World Almanac for steamship rates. They aren't there. I checked. You've got Chinese New Year wrong. The characters aren't consistent. You describe Liza Hamilton one way and then have her act a different way.

EDITOR

You make Cathy too black. The reader won't believe her. You make Sam Hamilton too white. The reader won't believe him. No Irishman ever talked like that.

WRITER

My grandfather did.

EDITOR

Who'll believe it?

SECOND EDITOR

No children ever talked like that.

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WRITER

(Losing temper as a refuge from despair.)

God damn it. This is my book. I'll make the children talk any way I want. My book is about good and evil. Maybe the theme got into the execution. Do you want to publish it or not?

EDITORS

Let's see if we can't fix it up. It won't be much work. You want it to be good, don't you? For instance, the ending. The reader won't understand it.

WRITER

Do you?

EDITOR

Yes, but the reader won't.

PROOFREADER

My God, how you do dangle a participle. Turn to page so and so.

There you are, Pat. You came in with a box of glory and there you stand with an arm full of damp garbage.

And from this meeting a new character has emerged. He is called The Reader.

THE READER

He is so stupid you can't trust him with an idea.
He is so clever he will catch you in the least error.
He will not buy short books.
He will not buy long books.
He is part moron, part genius and part ogre.
There is some doubt as to whether he can read.

—*From a letter to Pascal Covici, 1952*

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ON HAVING A WRITER IN THE FAMILY

This is sad news, but I can't think of a thing you can do about it. I can remember the horror which came over my parents when they became convinced that it was so with me—and properly so. What you have and they had to look forward to is life made intolerable by a mean, cantankerous, opinionated, moody, quarrelsome, unreasonable, nervous, flighty, irresponsible son. You will get no loyalty, little consideration and desperately little attention from him. In fact you will want to kill him. I'm sure my father and mother often must have considered poisoning me. There will be no ease for you or for him. He won't even have the decency to be successful or if he is, he will pick at it as though it were failure for it is one of the traits of this profession that it always fails if the writer is any good. And Dennis [Dennis Murphy] is not only a writer but I am dreadfully afraid a very good one.

I hasten to offer Marie and you my sympathy but I must also warn you that you are helpless. Your function as a father from now on will be to get him out of jail, to nurture him just short of starvation, to watch in despair while he seems to be irrational—and your reward for all this will be to be ignored at best and insulted and vilified at worst. Don't expect to understand him, because he doesn't understand himself. Don't, for God's sake, judge him by ordinary rules of human virtue or vice or failings. Every man has his price but the price of a writer, a real one, is very hard to find and almost impossible to implement. My best advice to you is to stand aside, to roll with the punch and particularly to protect your belly. If you are contemplating killing him, you had better do it soon or it will be too late. I can see no peace for him and little for you. You can deny relationship. There are lots of Murphys.

—From a letter to John Murphy, February 21, 1957

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ON HONORS

I think of a number of pieces which should be done but that I as a novelist can't or should not do. One would be on the ridiculous preoccupation of my great contemporaries, and I mean Faulkner and Hemingway, with their own immortality. It is almost as though they were fighting for billing on the tombstone.

Another thing I could not write and you can is about the Nobel Prize. I should be scared to death to receive it, I don't care how coveted it is. But I can't say that because I have not received it. But it has seemed to me that the receivers never do a good nor courageous piece of work afterwards. It kind of retires them. I don't know whether this is because their work was over anyway or because they try to live up to the prize and lose their daring or what. But it would be a tough hazard to overcome and most of them don't. Maybe it makes them respectable and a writer can't dare to be respectable. The same thing goes for any kind of honorary degrees and decorations. A man's writing becomes less good with the numbers of his honors. It might be that fear in me that has made me refuse those L.L.D.'s that are constantly being put out by colleges. It may also be the reason why I have never been near the Academy even though I was elected to it. It may also be the reason I gave my Pulitzer money away.

—Six years after this extract from a 1956 letter to Pascal Covici Jr., Steinbeck himself won the Nobel Prize.

ON HEMINGWAY

The first thing we heard of Ernest Hemingway's death was a call from the London Daily Mail, asking me to comment on it. And quite privately, although something of this sort might be expected, I find it shocking. He had only one theme—only

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one. A man contends with the forces of the world, called fate, and meets them with courage. Surely a man has a right to remove his own life but you'll find no such possibility in any of H's heroes. The sad thing is that I think he would have hated accident much more than suicide. He was an incredibly vain man. An accident while cleaning a gun would have violated everything he was vain about. To shoot yourself with a shotgun in the head is almost impossible unless it is planned. Most such deaths happen when a gun falls, and then the wound is usually in the abdomen. A practiced man does not load a gun while cleaning it. Indeed a hunting man would never have a loaded gun in the house. There are shotguns over my mantle but the shells are standing on the shelf below. The guns are cleaned when they are brought in and you have to unload a gun to clean it. H had a contempt for mugs. And only a mug would have such an accident. On the other hand, from what I've read, he seems to have undergone a personality change in the last year or so. Certainly his last summer in Spain and the resulting reporting in *Life* were not in his old manner. Perhaps, as Paul de Kruif told me, he had had a series of strokes. That would account for the change.

But apart from all that—he has had the most profound effect on writing—more than anyone I can think of. He has not a vestige of humor. It's a strange life. Always he tried to prove something. And you only try to prove what you aren't sure of. He was the critics' darling because he never changed style, theme nor story. He made no experiments in thinking nor in emotion. A little like Capa[1], he created an ideal image of himself and then tried to live it. I am saddened at his death. I never knew him well, met him a very few times and he was always pleasant and kind to me although I am told that privately he spoke very disparagingly of my efforts. But then he thought of other living writers not as contemporaries but as antagonists. He really cared about his immortality as though he weren't sure of it. And there's little doubt that he has it.

[1] *Robert Capa, the famous* Life *photographer.*

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One thing interests me very much. For a number of years he has talked about a big book he was writing and then about several books written and put away for future publication. I have never believed these books exist and will be astonished if they do. A writer's first impulse is to let someone read it. Of course I may be wrong and he may be the exception. For the London Daily Express, I have two lines by a better writer than either of us. They go—

"He was a man, take him all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again."

And since he was called Papa—the lines are doubly applicable.

—From a letter to Pascal Covici,
July 1, 1961

ON FAME

It's nice over here because every place you look is a view. Most of them ruins—you can't find who built them or when or why. It makes ambition seem a little ridiculous. I've written a lot of books and some are very nice or have some nice things in them. And it's nice to be asked how it felt to write *God's Little Acre* and *Farewell to Arms*.

—From a letter to Elia Kazan,
Nice, France, November 22, 1961

Little presses write to me for manuscripts and when I write back that I haven't any, they write to ask if they can print the letter saying I haven't any.

—From a letter to Elizabeth Otis,
July 1939

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LAST LETTER*

Dear Elizabeth:

I have owed you this letter for a very long time—but my fingers have avoided the pencil as though it were an old and poisoned tool

**To Elizabeth Otis, his agent—found long after his death under the blotter on his work table by his wife, Elaine Steinbeck.*

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Joseph Papaleo

PICASSO AT NINETY-ONE

—To Kurt Roesch

Except for an occasional touch of flu
the painter Picasso is in his usual good health.
He still works and enjoys auto rides in the country:

the clown face smiles from the passenger seat;
he watches a line of plane trees run up a hill,
turns quickly to see a white dressed child in some grass—
a quick shot, yet the head has copied it:
we would need to be inside his eyes to see all the pictures
he is making, stand at the entrance of the cornea to catch
the images being turned around, colored, altered by the
mocking gargoyle,
that curled up face of honest cheater, Pablo the make-
believe dope
(they gossipped that when he was expected for a visit at
another's studio,
the artist would cover all works in progress); all knew the
eyes would
absorb them, the fool face go and make pictures often better.
Few painters were as dumb as Pablo. Braque might have been,
but he had
the French practical middle wisdom: he knew what he was
breaking away from,
knew the nature of his rebellion, knew that French rebellion
is chic,
and ate at the same hour every day. Braque plodded along,
polishing
his canvases with good floorwax neatly, knowing that French
rebellion
is usually bullshit rebellion—as distinct, say, from Russian
rebellion,
which produces the same old thing again, or Chinese
rebellion, which

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twists a few more inconceivable traits out of human beings,
or American
rebellion, which takes place only if the subsidiary and foreign
film and TV
rights can be sold for a decent price.

But let me get back to Pablo's eyes: there he is on the seat
next to the driver, a nice lady who loves him
though he can make it with her about once every two months
and then only in the morning when he has some berry juice
stored up;
she lives with his smiles and the energy of his work,
as if the essence of his balls were part of the sunny air
of his studio, with all the work filling up rooms.

This poem wishes to digress, but it keeps moving like the
auto rides
of the master at ninety one years; the master might tell you
he takes digressions very seriously: he has taken junk
seriously;
he has taken meagre ideas of others seriously, even boring
ones.

Why is this, Maestro?

He will not answer anymore; he is Spanish-amused by words
on the creative process; it is a garden of something like flowers
and for each it grows differently; don't read about it or hear
of it
from someone else; it is not necessary to know more than that
the subject
means nothing to Pablo, nothing at all: Napoleon, a dead
fish, a rotten
apple, a woman's body—all the same. The Maestro permits
you to know
only this: the mixing process is the pleasure and the work;
the machine
also that absorbs, twists, turns inside out, throws into the waste
and then removes the garbage, tells lies, urinates.

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The rest you look for in stones, coal piles, pizza parlors, rivers,
and lakes of course if you can find them. Insects, snakes,
the day of your father's death, and crazy people, sometimes;
make your own list; there is little good advice.

I return to Picasso taking his car rides at ninety one,
doing the Sunday ride excursion that my father did with us
in the thirty one Buick (when Momma refused to come along
because she was afraid of American roads, having never
removed Salerno
from her eyes); those great rides with nothing to do but learn
with my eyes, crowded on the mohair seat with my tiny space
of back window
and my sister's ass against my ribs and my brother's hand
resting on my neck
at the back, gently.

Sorry to get off on a digression again.

Pablo! Pablo takes the rides every day, after lunch
while the fish and the wine can still be tasted on the back
tongue
dozing then waking as the car shakes and rocks like a crib
to take you into paradise (wouldn't you rather go to heaven
in a white Mercedes than a casket, which costs almost
as much?
I know. I had to buy a casket for my mother and it cost more
than the used car I wanted to buy at the time. But my brothers
and sisters were all worried about Momma's memory and pride
and respect (others laughing at us, making *mala figura*,
they meant).
But all it meant was that the mortician got richer from us
dumb wops,
knowing we are those people who spend all our money on
caskets and flowers,
carfuls of flowers (haven't you seen them in the papers when
a dead
reputed Mafia leader is buried and the FBI comes to take
pictures at

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the circus funeral, and everybody says: oh yes, it's one of their funerals.)
My big problem then was that I needed the money for a car
and would have gladly buried Momma in a winding sheet under a tree
and ridden a Fiat 850 Spyder in her memory. Momma would never have been happy
in a box, since she had more energy at eighty three when she dropped dead
than US kids do at twenty. And if I had done it she would be smiling
at me from heaven every day as I rode too fast for comfort but not too fast
for pleasure. Momma could wave down and warn me about speeding; she
would have that to do every day, which is what Mothers like to do
regardless of their sons' responses: she would caution me, knowing I
was a man who had to live or die finding my own daring.

But I bought the casket instead. I did what all the other dumb wops
did, all the other slaves to morticians and mayors, the officials of everything.
If we have gangsters it is because we have such a capacity for loving
obedience of the laws. That's not a Picasso secret; it's a wop secret.

Here is a motto for all wops to hang over their houses, in big letters:
WHAT DEMON POSSESSED ME THAT I BEHAVED SO WELL.
I wish the Maestro (and myself) one morning on the good-smelling
leather seat of a Mercedes, speeding while absorbing one last picture

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in the middle of his eyes, perhaps a blue riviera day, the sky
at Mentone,
the seacolor at Bordighera, with deep green trees and the
rock dirt
background, a spot of white house, some pieces of octopus
shining on a dock, fresh bread and a fiasco of wine
on a tin table and tomatoes and cherries or oranges.

Envoi:
Have someone take you for auto rides, go up any road—
even Bruckner Boulevard, still not completed, getting new
tentacles,
trucks, divagations, traffic jams. Watch the stores, the dumb
small towns
on Long Island with gas stations and bowling alleys and
Burger Kings
and Dairy Queens. And even if you get pissed off that we
compare
unfavorably to, say, Florence, just let the pictures come into
the eye.
You'll die less bored; you'll die maybe with the smile on
your face
that we often see on the Maestro, Pablo, who made the world
again
but doesn't give a shit, as long as he gets his daily rides.

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Jack Galef

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ISN'T HUNGRY

The Museum of Modern Art isn't hungry
Each wall is perfection
Leger says hello to Picasso
Matisse defines red and green
The paintings are testaments to an achieved order of delight
There are no hot dogs here
No sad sacks
Each picture is part of a wanted family
Money waves around their edges like puffy summer clouds
Visitors to the museum are poised for excellence
Fashionable faces gaze into the paintings
And the paintings gaze back
It is beauty recognizing itself
Rousseau looks green and primordial
Contained in a simple frame of artistic balance
The viewers like what they see
On the fourth floor are industrial products
Gritless, dazzling
They sit behind glass cages waiting to move
Beyond their display of purity
They are America's best beauty
A Calder hangs over the marble staircase
Punctuating the air like a pretty comma
It is a whispered secret of reverence
Everyone wants to touch it
The sculpture garden is sunny
The catalogues are selling well
The museum shines in its own light
There are no limited satisfactions here
Each piece is wiped clean of the work that made it

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They take on a sullen life of their own
Errorless
They tell us we are not
I think of my brother testing rats in Canada
He is a psychologist
I wonder about his marriage
Looking at a Gauguin
I think of myself in Tahiti
There are impatient automobiles and Bermuda shorts
The painting is a perfect idyll of our hidden desires
Leaving the museum
I consider a domestic problem
Everything seems uncertain
Each solution is a struggle
It doesn't matter
We are flawed
We look for a human accord
Of artless peace

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David Lehman

THE ARTFUL DODGER

As a boy (who destroyed his eyesight
Reading in the dark by flashlight)
I went to the library
For *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens
Because I had heard of the artful dodger
And figured he must have played for Brooklyn;
And even now, years later, as an English major
(Who's read five novels by Dickens)
I still like to think of the artful dodger
As a baseball player, a pitcher preferably,
Sandy Koufax to be exact:
After
Shutting out the Twins in the fifth game
Of the 1965 World Series, Sandy was asked
By Vince Scully (the Dodger announcer,
Like me a red-head) on television
How he felt. "Like a hundred years old,"
Sandy replied, softly, sincerely
Embarrassed by the camera more than the question
And by an arthritic elbow, pained.
Three days later
He came back, despite insufficient rest
And the curious absence of his curve ball,
Again to shut out Minnesota, only this time
In the crucial, final seventh game,
With a show of skill and determination
That totally demoralized the opposition,
Killebrew, Allison, and company.
"Sandy,
Now how do you feel?" asked the persistent Scully.
"Like a hundred and one," was Sandy's reply
As an hysterical Lou Johnson (who hit
The game-winning homer) poured champagne
Over his bashful dark semitic head.

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Robert Bly

Two Translations from Kabir

THE DOORS ARE CLOSED

What comes out of the harp? Music!
And there is a dance no hands or feet dance.
No fingers play it, no ears hear it,
because the Holy One is the ear,
and the one listening too.
The great doors remain closed, but the spring fragrance
is inside anyway
and no one sees what takes place there.
Men and women who have escaped from the old part of their
brain will understand this poem.

THE BREATH

Are you looking for me? I am in the next seat!
My shoulder is against yours.
You will not find me in stupas, nor in Indian shrine rooms,
nor in the synagogues, nor in cathedrals:
not in masses, nor kirtans, not in legs winding around
neck, nor in eating nothing but vegetables.
When you really look for me, you will see me instantly—
you will find me in the tiniest house of time.
Kabir says, "Student, tell me, what is God?
He is the breath inside the breath."

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Andrei Codrescu (*Monsieur Teste in America*) has published collections of his poetry in numerous small press chapbooks and in two full-length books, *License to Carry a Gun* (1970), and *The History of the Growth of Heaven* (1973). His autobiography, *The Life and Times of an Involuntary Genius*, was recently published by George Braziller-Venture Books.

James Corpora (*Tortoise and Hare*) is currently at work on his first novel, to be called *The Mexican*. He has been published in *The Massachusetts Review* and a story is forthcoming in *The Mississippi Review*. He lives in San Diego, California.

Ray Russell (*The Smiling Mandarin*) has had six books published and a seventh, *Incubus*, will appear early next year from Morrow. His story *Rational Moments* appeared in *The Paris Review* #59. Other short fiction has been published in *Playboy, Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and in over 50 anthologies and text books. He lives in Beverly Hills, California and has written screen plays for most of the major film studios.

Dallas Wiebe (" 'M' ") has published in *The Carolina Quarterly, The Minnesota Review, The Paris Review* and other quarterlies. His novel, *Skyblue the Badass*, was published by Paris Review Editions-Doubleday. He lives in Cincinnati.

INTERVIEW

Molly McKaughan (*Interview with J.P. Donleavy*) is Managing Editor of *The Paris Review*. Her poetry has been published in *MS.*, *The Paris Review*, and *Works* and is forthcoming in *Antioch Review, Northwest Review* and *Café Solo*. She was assisted in the interview by Fayette Hickox, Contributing Editor of *The Paris Review*.

POETRY

James Bertolino teaches at the University of Cincinnati where he edits the *Cincinnati Poetry Review*. In 1972 he was a winner of the Discovery contest sponsored by the 92nd St. YM-YWHA in New York City, and since then has published two books of poems, *Employed* (Ithaca House, 1977) and *Terminal Placebos* (New Rivers Press, 1975).

Robert Bly, poet, editor and translator, lives on a farm in western Minnesota where he edits *The Seventies*. He received the National Book Award for poetry in 1968 for *Light Around the Body* (Beacon Press). His other books are *Silence in the Snowy Fields, Friends, We Drank Some Darkness: Three Swedish Poets, Martinson, Ekelof and Transtromer*. His anthology *Leaping Poetry: An Idea with Poems and Translations* will appear this September from Beacon Press.

George Bogin's work has appeared in *The American Poetry Review, The Beloit Poetry Journal, The California Quarterly, The Columbia Forum, The Nation* and *Prairie Schooner* among others. Appearances are forthcoming in *The Arizona Quarterly, Concerning Poetry, The Massachusetts Review* and *Southern Poetry Review*. He has recently completed a book of his poetry, *Alone in the House*.

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Edwin Brock was born in London and has lived there most of his life; five years ago he moved to Norfolk, but he still commutes three days a week to the advertising agency where he works. He has published six collections of poetry since 1959, two of them from New Directions, New York. He is widely anthologized in English-speaking countries, and appears in the Penguin Modern Poets series.

Philip Dacey has been granted a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship. His poetry has appeared in *Heartland II: Poets of the Midwest* (Northern Illinois University Press) and *The American Poetry Anthology: Poets Under Forty* (Avon). He is married with two sons, and lives in Cottonwood, Minnesota.

Daniel Mark Epstein has had poems published in *The New Yorker, The New Republic* and other magazines. His most recent volume, *No Vacancies in Hell*, was published by Liveright in 1973. Mr. Epstein is a native of Maryland and lives in Baltimore. He will be giving a reading tour of Ohio and Pennsylvania this fall.

Jack Galef has an MFA from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa and has been published in *The New Yorker* and *Poetry Northwest*. He teaches an advanced poetry workshop at the School of Visual Arts and has a new poem forthcoming in *The New Yorker*. He lives in New York City.

Marc Lecard graduated from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1974. This fall he is attending San Francisco State, studying for an M.A. in creative writing. His poems have appeared in *Snapshots*, and are forthcoming in *Ant's Forefoot, Bones* and *Telephone*.

David Lehman teaches English at Columbia College. *Some Nerve* (Columbia Review Press) was published in 1973. He is at work on a book of prose poems entitled *The Sin Against the Holy Ghost*.

William Matthews teaches at the University of Colorado. His books are *Ruining the New Road* and *Sleek for the Long Flight* (Random House), and, in a limited edition with drawings by Ray Kass, *Sticks and Stones* (Pentagram Press).

John McKernan is currently a Graduate Fellow at Boston University and lives in Dorchester, Massachusetts. His poems have appeared in *The Atlantic, Prairie Schooner, The Paris Review* and others. He edits *The Little Review*.

Joseph Papaleo has published two novels and many short stories—in magazines from *The New Yorker* to *Penthouse*. He is currently working on two more novels and a film script. This is his first appearance in *The Paris Review*.

Ira Sadoff's collection of poetry, *Settling Down*, was published by Houghton Mifflin earlier this year. He has poems forthcoming in *The New Yorker, Poetry, Esquire, Antaeus* and *Poetry Now* among others. He is currently working on a second collection of poems.

P. Schneidre published two volumes of poetry, *Sidereal Messenger* and *Suspended Sentences*, with Pygmalion Press in 1974. He lives in Los Angeles where he is co-editor of *Marilyn*, a magazine of new poetry.

Louis Simpson's new book, *Three on the Tower: The Lives and Works of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams* (Morrow), was published this year. He is the author of many books of poems, including *Selected Poems* for which he won the Pulitzer Prize.

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Ricardo da Silveira Lobo Sternberg lives in Los Angeles. This is his second appearance in *The Paris Review*.

James Tate's first collection of poetry, *The Lost Pilot*, won the 1967 Yale Younger Poets Contest. His subsequent collections are *Wrong Songs* (1970), *The Oblivion Ha-Ha* (1970), *Torches* (1971), *Hints to Pilgrims* (1971), *Absences* (1972), and most recently *Hottentot Ossuary*, published by the Temple Bar Bookstore, Cambridge, Mass. He is in the process of moving from Amherst, Mass. to Colorado.

Charles Webb is the editor of *Madrona*, a poetry magazine in Seattle, Washington. His work has appeared in numerous little magazines, and previously in *The Paris Review*.

Pat Wilson lives in Belmont, Massachusetts. She has written for *The Boston Globe* and *Downbeat Magazine*.

David Young's most recent books are *Boxcars* (Ecco Press) and his translation of Rilke's *Duino Elegies* (Barn Dream). He teaches at Oberlin College where he edits *Field*, a journal of contemporary poetry.

L.L. Zeiger received a Fels Award in poetry for 1975 from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines for the three poems in #60, Winter, 1974 of *The Paris Review*. Her work is soon to appear in several other magazines including *Kayak* and *Poetry Now*.

ART

Douglas Heubler lives in North Quincy, Massachusetts and lectures at Harvard. His painting, sculpture and "conceptual" art are in the public collections of the Addison Gallery of American Art, The Tate Gallery, The Stedlijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, The Museum of Modern Art and others. He is represented by the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York City.

Diane Piemonte is a young artist currently studying at Cooper Union in New York.

Jonathan Weld lives in Brooklyn, New York. His drawings have appeared in *The New York Times, Harper's Weekly*, and in issue #62 of *The Paris Review*.

* * *

We are pleased to announce the winner of the 1974 Aga Khan Prize for the best story published in the magazine: Lamar Herrin for *The Rio Loja Ringmaster*.

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